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ABSTRACT

High School Redirection is an alternative school that has been operating in Brooklyn (New York) for a number of years. It is run by the New York City Board of Schools, offers regular high school degrees, and serves a population of 475 students (50 percent male and 50 percent female) that is 80 percent Black and 20 percent Hispanic American. Alternative schools differ from regular schools in their small size, informal atmosphere, and the degree of personal attention students receive. This booklet describes the programs of High School Redirection and demonstrates the role such alternative schools can play in helping youth in need of intensive remedial education. A special feature of the school is the Strategies and Techniques for Advancement in Reading (STAR) program. Approximately 25 percent of the students attending High School Redirection are enrolled in this intensive reading program in which students stay with the same teacher for five periods to concentrate on reading development. The Department of Labor is providing grant funds to establish similar schools in seven cities across the country. These seven replication sites are succeeding, but many more are needed. Appendix A describes the STAR program and provides sample lessons. Appendix B describes the replication project. Three figures and three charts illustrate the appendices. A seven-item list of references is included. (SLD)

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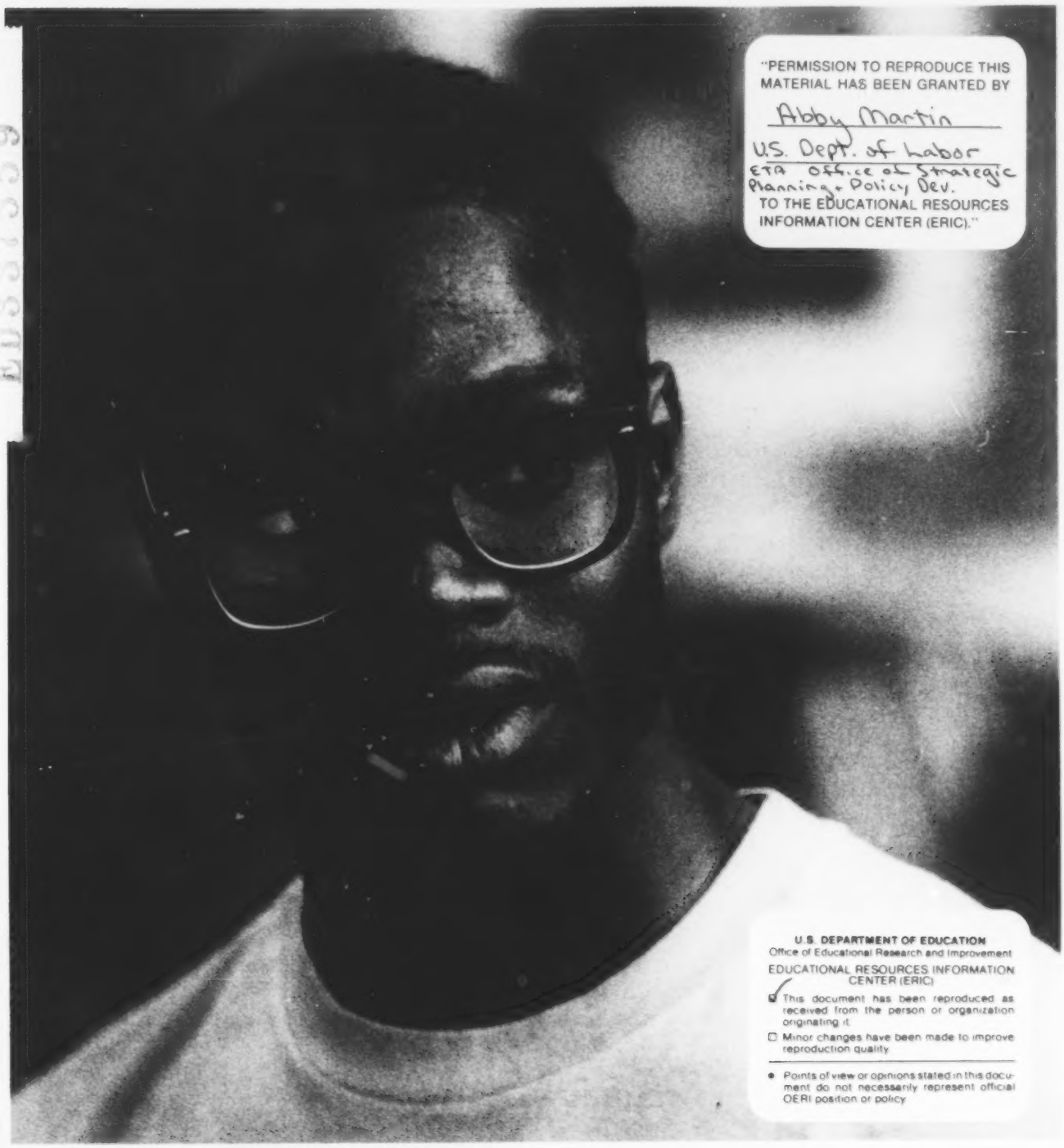
A Guide to High School Redirection

U.S. Department of Labor
Employment and Training Administration

March 1991



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A Guide to High School Redirection

U.S. Department of Labor
Employment and Training Administration

March 1991

R & D Report 91-01

U.S. Department of Labor
Lynn Martin, Secretary

Employment and Training Administration
Roberts T. Jones
Assistant Secretary of Labor

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Policy Development
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This report was prepared under Purchase Order Number 99-8-4671-75-010-04 as part of the U.S. Department of Labor's effort to support the replication of exemplary youth programs. Exemplary program models are presented with the understanding that they will be replicated with policies, teaching methods and curriculum materials adapted to the needs of the local population to be served. Since individuals preparing reports such as this under government sponsorship are encouraged to express their own judgement, this report does not necessarily represent the official position or policy of the U.S. Department of Labor. The report was written by Elaine Ciccone, formerly the STAR Coordinator at High School Redirection and now the coordinator of an alternative school at Baisley Bay High School.

a guide to HIGH SCHOOL REDIRECTION

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High School Redirection
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FOREWORD

Over the past few years, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has become increasingly aware of the seriousness of the school dropout problem in our country's largest cities. In some inner-city neighborhoods, over 50 percent of youth drop out of school. Such high dropout rates are devastating both in terms of individual and community effects. How can youth compete for jobs that pay enough to support a family if they do not have basic reading and math skills? How can inner-city communities improve if half of their youth do not even complete a high school education?

National statistics bear out the serious problems dropout youth face in the labor market. In the economically disadvantaged population, roughly 60 percent of out-of-school, non-college, long-term unemployed youth are high school dropouts.

Research suggests that dropping out of school is an end-result of other problems which have their origin much earlier in life. Problems associated with dropping out of school include being two or more years older than classmates because of previous grade failure, low marks in school, chronic absenteeism, disciplinary problems, little participation in either in-school or out-of-school activities, lack of encouragement from home, a reading level two or more years behind grade level, absence of the mother or father at home, and poor acceptance by classmates. One researcher described dropping out of school as being caused by a "complex interplay of failure, feeling of failure, lack of encouragement, lack of achievement, and isolation from school and home activities."

It is, therefore, essential that programs aimed at school dropouts be concerned with long-term employability rather than quick job placement. In recent years, alternative schools have emerged as a promising model for addressing the needs of dropout-prone youth. Such schools differ from regular high schools in their small size, informal atmosphere, and the degree of personal attention students receive. These schools are committed philosophically to working with students who, for whatever reasons, are not succeeding in the mainstream.

High School Redirection is an alternative school which has been operating in Brooklyn, New York for a number of years. It is operated by the New York City Board of Education and offers regular high school degrees. A special feature of the school is its STAR program. Roughly one-fourth of its students are enrolled in this intensive reading program in which the students stay with the same teacher for five periods every day concentrating on their reading development. The school's success in improving reading skills is remarkable.

The Department of Labor is currently providing grant funds to help establish schools similar to High School Redirection in seven cities across the country. These cities include Cincinnati, Denver, Detroit, Los Angeles, Newark, Stockton, and Wichita. The U.S. Department of Education assisted us in the selection of these sites. Local school boards are operating the schools and service delivery areas (SDAs) under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) provide partial support through the DOL grants that have been awarded for the project.

We are encouraged by the success of the schools in our seven replication sites, but there is a great need for more such schools. These schools represent a bridge between the educational and job training systems—providing a common service deliverer to which both can refer youth in need of intensive remedial education in an alternative setting.

I hope that this guide to High School Redirection will make people more aware of the potential of alternative schools, and will encourage local school systems and the JTPA system to develop such schools in inner cities across the country.

Roberts T. Jones
Assistant Secretary of Labor
for Employment and Training

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Philosophy

High School Redirection was founded in 1968 in response to a felt need. Large numbers of students, and particularly minority students, were dropping out of New York City high schools. In some cases, the dropping out was in response to personal and family needs, but in too many cases, students were "push outs" — those for whom the system no longer had patience.

Redirection was and is committed to work with *any* student who drops out of school for *any* reason. This commitment is to give every student a second chance. Those who take advantage of that second chance—who attend regularly and work in their classes—will be supported even if they remain "difficult." They cannot, however, interfere with the education of other students. This is a difficult and delicate line to walk. We take the most needy students. We have very high expectations. We demand that they respect themselves and all others within the school. Yet we try to allow them to keep the defenses that have kept them from giving up until they are ready to leave those defenses behind. Sometimes the needs of the group outweigh the needs of the individual. Sometimes the group must support the individual. This is our central dilemma and a *very individual, case by case decision*. As soon as we start to make rules that apply to all students for every situation, we give up the center of our philosophy, that we will provide a chance for every student who asks for it.

It has often been very difficult to maintain our position, not so much because of outside influences, but because of internal pressures to "upgrade" the student body. School systems are conservative, and the staff of an alternative school is not immune to the pressures of conformity and safety. Everyone fights over the "better" students. Teachers are encouraged to try new approaches, new programs, and there seems to be an inexorable need to seek to try them out on a selected student population. Pull out programs, whether college bound or a job training class, vie for the "better" student, while teachers in "regular" official classes fight a rear-guard action to keep the student they have worked with long enough to have begun to enjoy the fruits of success.

This internal tension demands that our philosophy be struggled with time and again. In microcosm, we play out all of the battles of the civil rights and liberties movements again and again, trying to decide each case on merits and not on precedent. These do not tend to be easy matters to decide. If, for example, we are morally certain, but cannot prove, that a student had a non-student friend shoot at, with intent to kill, another student, what do we do? Both students are seniors and attend regularly. Neither will graduate if sent elsewhere. The only eyewitness is the victim, who did not see the face of the other student, but is certain of the identity. The problem is worthy of Solomon, but falls into the lap of the all too human staff, each of whom has an agenda, and all of whom must live both with the decision and its implications. How much easier to be more selective in choosing students!

The basic philosophical underpinning of the school is one of respect—what psychologists call unconditional positive regard—and each person is entitled to that respect, staff no less than students. It is definitely not a permissive system, although the freedom of speech, dress and movement may make it appear to be so. Each student is respected as a learner, and is entitled to learn how to succeed and to fail without fear of ridicule. Each staff member is entitled to make mistakes, and expected to take responsibility for them. Students are expected to take on increasing responsibility for themselves with the knowledge that there is always a safety net available to them. We try to learn to deal with our grief and failure as well as we deal with our joy and success.

So with the incident described above, a compromise was reached with all parties that none were very happy with. The perpetrator took his last two and a half high school credits on an independent study basis, while holding down a full time job. He was allowed to graduate with his class. The victim continued in school, also graduating with his class. He struggled with trying to understand how rights to due process sometimes are unfair. For the first time in his life, he agreed to forgo the law of revenge he had learned on the street, and accept society's law. It was very difficult. He also learned that the adults around him *felt* much as he did, but had a greater need to be consistent philosophically, and bowed to due process.

Students

We serve a population of 475 students that is almost exactly 50 percent male and 50 percent female. 80 percent of our students are black, 20 percent hispanic. We usually have one or two white students, usually of Irish or Italian background. Almost 25 percent of our students, both male and female, are parents, although our day care center currently only provides 40 spaces. Thirty percent of our students read under a sixth grade level, and are served by our reading program. More than 50 percent of our students are receiving free lunch, and many others are eligible, but choose not to apply. All of our students have the common experience of having had serious problems in their previous schools, with the majority having actually dropped out before coming to us. All of our students are self-selected. None have to come to school. Most are survivors, who will make a decent life for themselves, one way or another, with or without us.

When we transferred to our current site in 1981, most of the surrounding area was rubble, broken by high-rise, low-income housing. There was no neighborhood, no block association to oppose our use of the site, an old elementary school building. Our students then were, by and large, poorer, older, and less heterogenous than our student population is now. We still serve one of the poorest areas in the city, with the highest infant mortality rate, the second highest rate of teenage pregnancy, the highest young male unemployment rate, and the second highest murder rate in the city.

There has, however, been a renaissance sponsored by the East Brooklyn churches, which, through their Nehemiah housing effort, are reclaiming the rubble for housing for working-class families. Our student body reflects that change. Our students are more likely to be the children of the working poor or low to middle income working class parents than previously. They are also likely to fall into the grey area of social services—no longer eligible for Medicaid, but unable to pay even Medicaid mill prices for health care. Family income is just above the cut off for the higher education opportunity program, or for subsidized day care.

They are, by and large, those from the area who will succeed in some degree. They retain a belief in their ability to learn that even the worst of New York City education has been unable to stifle. On the whole, they have bought the American dream of marriage, a house in the suburbs, 1.2 children, a dog and a hamster. That their own lives and neighborhoods are a far cry from the dream strikes them as an obstacle to be overcome, not a preventative.

They are, quite often, the first in their families to graduate from high school. In some cases they are the younger brothers, sisters and cousins of previous Redirection graduates, forced to make use of the same refuge. Often it is apparent that this is the only child in the family who has a chance to escape poverty, hopelessness or drugs. We need to know what makes the difference between those who succeed and those who fail if we are to become effective in helping more students to succeed.

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Admissions

Although we generally accept every student who completes orientation, we occasionally have to recruit students, or to maintain a waiting list. Usually these situations are responses to artificial manipulation of the system—we lack a teacher, or schools are retaining students on register who no longer attend. Our approximately 500 students are a relatively stable number, and we need to do little besides be available to maintain our register.

Students begin the process of admission by coming in on a specific day between September 1 and October 31, or January 15 and March 31, usually a Tuesday. Students under 18 are required to appear with a parent, those over 18 encouraged to bring a parent. Orientation sessions are scheduled for Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, with programs issued on Friday afternoon for a Monday start in school.

During orientation, the counseling staff follows a group guidance curriculum that includes such topics as credit accumulation and personal responsibility. Students are tested for placement in both reading and math, unofficial transcripts are examined for class placement, and individual needs are assessed. Only those who complete orientation are admitted, with test scores forming no part of admission decisions, except for space considerations. If a student misses a day in orientation, he or she must begin all over again the following week. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule as well. Clinic appointments that are discussed before the day of appointment, legitimate illness or family emergency would require only the addition of an orientation day, usually the following Monday.

Generally, students are self referred, having heard of Redirection from neighborhood friends or relatives. High school placement frequently calls for special education placements, which we honor when we can after a careful interview with both the principal and the special education assistant principal. A few high school guidance counselors use us as a resource for their potential drop outs, but generally drop outs are ignored except for a form letter sent to the home. The student would then seek us out through word of mouth information. Some agencies, like Advocates for Children, which provide us with services, use us all the time for placement of their troubled students. We accept far more than our fair share of superintendent's suspension students, those expelled from their schools for serious infractions, like weapon possession. We complain about these referrals out loud, but actually like to receive these students. They become excellent students with us because they generally still believe in themselves.

In a typical September, we start with between 325 and 375 students, having graduated 50 to 70 the previous June. Fifty to 75 students will fail to return in September, some lost to jobs, relocation or programs like Job Corps, but 50 percent of the non-returnees are drop outs. By February, we will have graduated about 30 to 40 more, and will have lost another 70 or 80 to the various other causes, including dropping out. So our September intake ranges between 100 and 150 students, usually nearer the higher figure, and the February intake ranges from 75 to 125 students, usually about 100. Exceptional admissions, like superintendent's suspension students, continue all year, but never exceed 15 or so during the non-orientation periods.

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CSP (Family Group)

The heart of the school, which makes implementation of our philosophy possible, is the CSP group. CSP stands for Civil Service Preparation, a leftover from the days when Redirection was a Manpower program. The name remained to help to justify the credit-bearing aspect to what in most schools is simply an official class. At Redirection the official class becomes a surrogate home. Part counseling group, part family, part academic class, the CSP group is at the heart of the school experience, occupying a central place in the school day as well as in the school philosophy. The teacher to whom the student is assigned at intake, becomes, with few exceptions, the one with whom the student will spend his or her entire career at Redirection.

This method has, of course, both strengths and weaknesses. The student who is lucky in the draw will get a strong leader and mentor. The unlucky may suffer from a conflict of personality, or a teacher who leaves, or one who is inadequate. For these situations, the fail-safe of transfers, on a case by case basis, is provided. Generally, the transfers are a casual affair. A teacher lets it be known that he or she is having trouble with a student. New strategies are suggested, advice given. If they fail, if the teacher says nothing is helping after a few weeks, someone will say, "Do you want me to give him (her) a try in my class?" If the student is happier, then the transfer is made. Often, just the offer of relief is enough to make the teacher willing to continue to try—we tend to be competitive about competence—or the same teacher will be willing to rescue a colleague next time around. When a teacher leaves, all CSP teachers meet and try to give each student the best possible placement. We are well aware of the trauma involved in a family group breakup, and if we can't keep the class intact with a new teacher, we at least try to give the students choices, and keep groups of friends together. There are always a few students *nobody* wants, but alternative schools are amply sprinkled with rescuers, so even the least attractive prospect finds a place.

All of this is very casual. Formal procedures are minimal. Our students—and teachers—tend to be impatient with formalities. In most cases we have run afoul of bureaucracy before, and fight the imposition of bureaucratic methods.

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What is not casual is our effort to provide for family group curriculum that covers all of the aspects of curriculum that we have historically covered in CSP groups. This effort includes weekly meetings on the curriculum and discussion of student problems.

> "...Sometimes the teachers get on your back but they don't get on your back because they don't like you. They get on you because they care about you and they want you to do better."

The curriculum includes parenting, values clarification, job readiness, career exploration, exploration of personal and societal values, personal resource management, citizenship and orientation. Each ten weeks has a thirty-five to forty lesson curriculum, although we have made compromises that allow CSP teachers the freedom and time to conduct groups and attend to their own agendas, which range from SAT preparation to the exploration of the principles of classical philosophy. Basically, three days a week are mandated for CSP occupational education curriculum which satisfies the state requirements. The remaining time can be spent on individual concerns, or the additional lessons may be used for reinforcement or enrichment.

The central importance of the CSP groups cannot be overstated. The CSP teacher functions as parent, advocate, intervener, counselor and friend. It is the CSP teacher who contacts parents, monitors attendance, helps to arrange for day care, shelters, dentists, athletic and job medical clearances, replacement of lost bus passes, psychiatric help, and who listens to both content and nuances in a student's conversation. A student perhaps best summed up the relationship with the question, asked of the teacher in genuine puzzlement, "Why did I let *you* in?" The answer, for the best of CSP teachers, lies in the listening.

Ideally, the CSP group is never a "new" class, unless a new class has been created. As "old" students graduate or leave, new students replace them, so that there is always a core of students to carry on lore and tradition, conveying mores to the new students. Although we are a big city, we are also a series of neighborhoods, so most new students see at least a familiar face in the new class. Often, new students are assigned a "buddy", a junior or senior who can take some responsibility for another student.

Once a class is "created"—the teacher and students have hammered out the rules and have tempered them with time and commitment to each other—the class runs itself. New students are integrated quickly and thoroughly, with little or no effort on the part of the teacher. The students provide class rules and orientation, older students provide stability and wisdom. The result of the system is a school with minimal discipline problems. When a new student seeks approval by behaving in ways that gained attention in previous situations, the attempt is ignored by the other students, or treated as peculiar behavior. Students care for each other by keeping each other out of trouble. The fights which do occur are as likely to be broken up by students as by staff members. The student who last year had an uncontrollable temper volunteers to "buddy" his replacement in that role, and help him to achieve balance, too. The mixture of ages and grades creates a sense of continuity and community.

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Staff

As a New York City Board of Education facility we are subject to the same rules as any other high school in terms of staffing. New York city has a two tier system of licencing. New staff tend to start with a temporary per diem license, which they usually use to fill full time positions until a test in their license area comes up. These per diems can always be replaced by someone with a regular license, which contributes an additional anxiety for a new teacher. Regular, day high school teachers have passed a written short answer exam in their subject area, a writing screening for standard English, and a content-based interview. Only a regular teacher is eligible for tenure, and to progress up the salary scale beyond the fourth year salary.

As a school that is considered undesirable, we rarely have a problem with people trying to replace our per diems. This is both a strength and a weakness. Our last UFT transfer teacher came to us eight years ago. On the other hand, we are always struggling with inexperienced new staff. We seek, and find, our own staff, using whatever sources we can. Our teachers give a great deal of themselves, and of their time, to give our students the best start they can.

There are roughly three sets of students, each served by a different set of teachers, although there is considerable overlap. The STAR Program has four or five classes, depending on staffing. It has a fulltime counselor who also serves as coordinator. The college bound group has one teacher for three periods, with a math and science component. The regular school consists of the 14 academic teachers. STAR and the regular group share the five funded program teachers. The 14 regular teachers are divided as follows: two science, two math, three English, three Social studies, three business, one Spanish/hygiene/music. We offer art through a resource room teacher as an independent study. STAR teachers take care of their own English and social studies classes. Three business teachers are needed to staff the computer rooms, which can only serve eighteen students at a time, and provide our only vocational offering.

Alternative education is generally found in the no-frills aisle, but our school supports three counselors, a much more favorable rate than is true city-wide. One is the STAR coordinator, the other two serve the regular school, with one of the two also designated as the college advisor serving the college bound. The counselors provide the CSP teachers with the support they need to deal with the myriad concerns the students are encouraged to discuss. None of our CSP teachers are trained counselors, although, of course, many are more interested in counseling simply because they chose alternative education.

In theory, all teachers in the school are CSP teachers. In practice, there are designated exceptions, like those who teach state and federally funded remedial programs who are exempted from official class by statute. Then there are the exceptions to the rule, which covers about three to five other teachers, nearly all with compensatory time positions, who teach three or fewer classes. The remaining 20 or so teachers carry the CSP program, some cheerfully, some less so. We struggle with this disparity all of the time, from time to time reinstituting the rule that every teacher have a CSP, then exceptions creep in until there is another round of enforcement of the rule.

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Administrative Structure and Budget

Like most high schools, Redirection is run by a principal and an assistant principal. Because of the small size of most alternative high schools, both administrators are highly visible jacks of all trades. Most know a substantial portion of the student body by name, and are intimately involved in the day to day joys and griefs of staff and students.

Alternative high schools were until recently part of their own superintendency, but were placed back into the regular administrative structure by a recent executive director of the high schools. We have just been restored to our own superintendency, with our former superintendent back in place. For us, this is a very positive development. It enables the alternative structure to exist in an accepting rather than a rejecting environment. We can help each other to improve instead of fighting a constant rearguard action for survival.

No school runs on love alone. All New York City alternative schools consider themselves underfunded. Basic support funding is the equivalent to that given to an elementary school, as is the principal's salary. High School Redirection is funded at the rate of 41.79 New York City Board of Education units. A unit roughly approximates the cost of a single teacher's salary, less health benefits. The unit rate is currently $34,000. So our budget for the year is about $1,421,000.

There are many important exceptions that make that figure misleading. It does not include teachers from funded programs, like Chapter I and state funded remediation, which in our case is a total of five additional teachers. It does not include custodial services, building maintenance or capital improvements. It does not include our four security officers, or books, furniture or supplies.

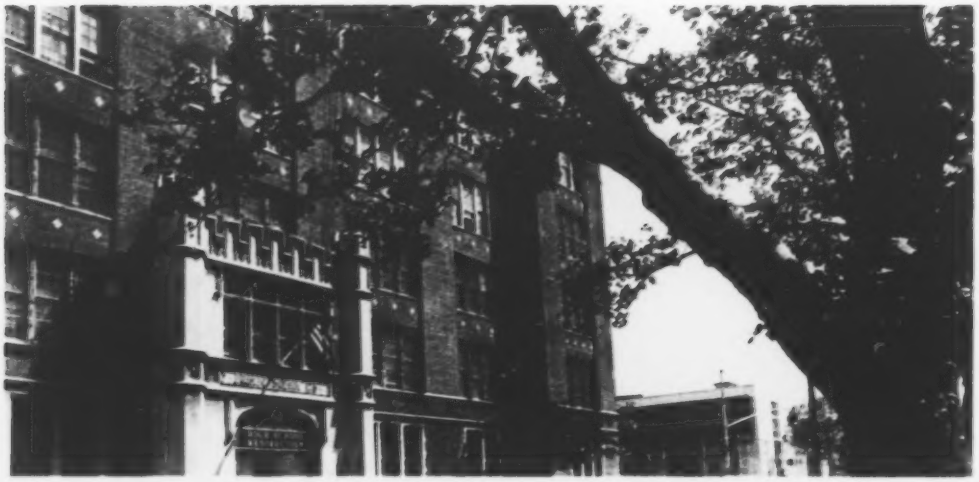
Our allocation for the year includes:

Principal	1	
Assistant Principal	1	
Social Worker (Day Care)	1	
Guidance Counselors	3	
Librarian	1	
Teachers	19	
Secretaries	4	
Teacher (Day Care)	1	
	Total units	30.94
Auxiliary Trainer	1	
Parenting	1	
Family Paraprofessional	2	
Educational Para	8	
Educational Para	7	
School Aide	5	
	Total units	8.38
	Remaining hourly units	2.47
	Total	41.79

The nine staff mentioned above, five teachers and four security officers, are not included in the figures. In addition, New York State Textbook funds provide $25 per student per school year for basic book support. A full-time custodial staff of four, as well as two part-timers is also excluded.

As figured, the allocation above includes our day care program, under the administration of the city-wide LYFE Program (Living for the Young Family through Education), at the rate of 5.11 units for one teacher, one social worker, and eight paraprofessionals. LYFE is actually funded by a combination of federal and state monies that are included within the tax-levy budget.

Operation



Our students receive the same diploma by meeting the same requirements as any other student in any other school in New York City. This is not to say that our offering, for example, in biology will be the same as the Regents course offered in one of the selective high schools. It will be, rather, a general biology course equivalent to the same course in another high school. We have only recently, and at the insistence of the State Department of Education, begun to offer Regents level courses. In New York State, the Regents level course is a demanding college preparatory course, culminating in a state-wide examination. Students who take these courses earn a Regents endorsement on their local diploma.

Alternative high schools have not offered Regents courses, even when the student population seemed to warrant it. We simply do not have the budget to offer a parallel set of classes that will not be filled to capacity. Now that the New York State Board of Regents is demanding that a certain percentage of diplomas from each school be Regents endorsed, sufficient funding will, presumably, be found. More than likely, several alternative schools will pool resources, or use the resources of the nearest comprehensive high school, to offer such courses as Regents physics or calculus.

Right now, all of our students must meet the state Regents Competency Test standards for graduation. As of 1989, the test will include reading, writing, math, social studies—global and American—and science. On the experimental exams given in June, 1988, our passing rate was 50 percent on the social studies, and 66 percent on the science. Previous to the social studies and science tests, the few students we had who failed to graduate because of failure on a Regents Competency Test almost always had failed the math, a content-based exam, so that we anticipate difficulty with the addition of three new content-based exams.

> "There is so much attention given in our school. Teachers pay more attention to you, not like in big schools... Redirection is filled with warmth and excitement."

We will adjust to this change, as we have adjusted to others. The problem is not with staff, and our protected jobs, but with the students who come to this juncture unprepared, and become the sacrifices to the cause of higher standards of graduation. Within a year or two, we will have the new tests down to a science of its own, and our students will pass. The tragedy is for the students caught in the transition, who run out of time, or patience, and fail to graduate as a result.

Our special education unit, while integrated completely in our school, is on a special budget line not included in our 41.79 units. The special education

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services in New York are centralized, and the budget comes out of the special education high school office. In our case, it totals 4.18 additional units, including three teachers, two paraprofessionals, and some basic supply monies (.24).

Generally, in starting new alternative schools in New York City, a six month basic support allocation of one principal, one assistant principal and one secretary is provided previous to opening. When there are exceptions, when there is less than six months lead time, several teacher lines are also usually included. For

example, if a school is slated to open November 1, and there has been no lead-in time previous to September, then the opening group in September would include at least three teachers in addition to the basic support. This provides the extra staff that enables the job to get done in the limited time.

In addition, of course, everything is more expensive in New York. Costs for the same services in other parts of the country may be considerably less for the same level of services.

Redirection shares many characteristics with other alternative high schools. One of the two things we do not share with other alternatives is our point system. New York City demands 40 credits for graduation from high school. We translate these credits into points as follows:

English	8	**(800 Points)**
Social Studies	7	**(700 Points)**
Math	4	**(400 Points)**
Science	4	**(400 Points)**
Hygiene	1	**(100 Points)**
Art/Music	2	**(200 Points)**
Business/Voc. Ed.	4	**(400 Points)**
Foreign Language	2	**(200 Points)**
Electives	8	**(800 Points)**

The point system gives a student points, translated into credit, for each day of satisfactory performance in class or completed assignment in extra credit. We divide our school year into four cycles of 9 to 10 weeks each instead of the traditional two semesters. This gives our students four fresh starts per year instead of two. It means that a student can recover in class and in attendance without traditional failure. It is interesting that studies are beginning to show that one of the primary fears of childhood and adolescence is fear of the humiliation of failure, particularly in school. For example, a student who attends 20 of 40 days in a typical cycle, and completes all assignments on days of attendance, will receive 25 of 50 points on his or her report card. It is not a pass or a fail, it is simply earnings, in much the same way as a worker who works 20 hours in a week will receive half of the pay of a worker who puts in 40 hours. We work to help students to recognize that working at half rate means double time in high school, since the points are allocated to be completed in four years, just like a regular credit system. Our half-time student will take eight years to complete high school, graduating well after the state-mandated cut-off at age 21.

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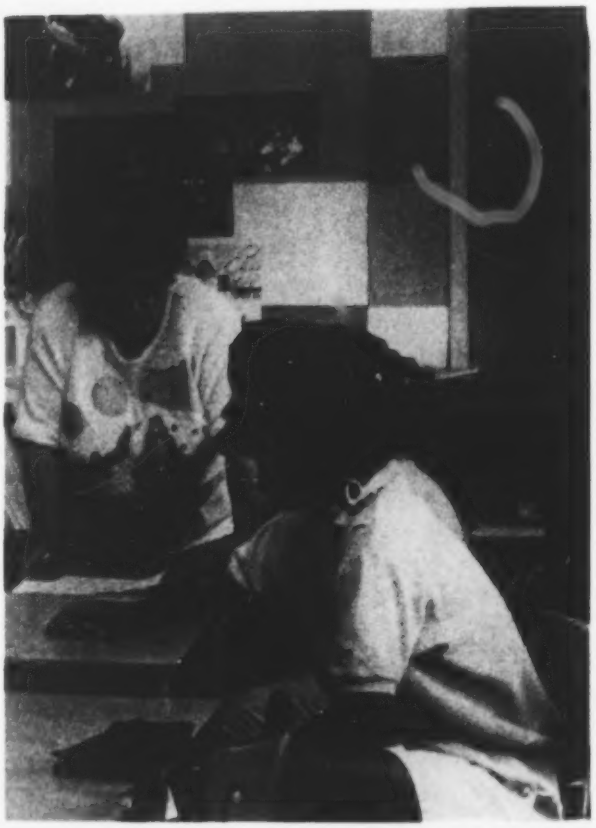
If a student wishes to advance, each 50 point class per cycle can be doubled to 100 points by doing extra credit work in each class. A student with a seven academic class schedule could earn a total of 650 class points per cycle. CSP does not offer extra credit. This student could earn 2600 points or 26 credits in the course of one academic year, excluding the possibilities of work points, night school or summer school.

It is a rare student who works at that rate consistently, although 700 to 1000 points are not unusual in the students' last few cycles. A good rate is 400 to 500 points per cycle, which would enable a graduation after two years. Academic honor roll is at 300 points per cycle, since there is no requirement for extra credit work.

In addition to regular class work, each class, except CSP offers extra credit. Each teacher sets his or her own work rules and eligibility rules for extra credit, within broad guidelines. Extra credit is just that, work done over and above the regular class work, and outside of class time. It may be an essay, short answers, outside readings, library visits, trips, reports, observations, in short, anything that will deepen or broaden a student's knowledge in the subject area. Extra credit cannot exceed the regular credit earned in the class. A student who does an excellent report, worth 50 points, can only receive 20 points for it if that's all the credit he receives in that class.

> "To me, without Redirection I would have probably dropped out but here they make you feel and know that getting a high school education will help you throughout your entire life."
>
> Chermaine Griffith

Independent study is a separate system, under the supervision of one teacher, by which students can be assigned to do outside independent work. In most cases, the student is assigned to a teacher who is not one of her academic instructors. They meet weekly, with the coordinator of the program keeping track of points earned and student reporting. At its best the independent study system offers another opportunity for mentoring, creating a more informal relationship between student and teacher, since there is no even implicit coercion. The student comes by choice, and the teacher is not expected to do any follow up if an appointment is missed.



In addition, many of our students attend night school, summer school or gain credit from work. Night and summer school follow the regular school credit accumulation rules. For work points, a student obtains a job through school, or presents a letter from an employer documenting the dates of employment and hours per week. Points are earned at the rate of 50 per cycle for 20 hours or more per week. Full time summer employment is credited at 100 points for the summer.

The great majority of our graduates come to us with some credits from their previous schools, and graduate within two years. The exceptions are those who come with no credits, and students in our reading program, who average two and a half to three years to graduation. Graduation rates range from a high of 80 percent of our entering LYFF program students for young parents to 35 percent of our students who enter reading at or below the third grade level. 18 percent of our total student body of 450 graduate each year.

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Discipline

Given our students' history of dropping out, underachieving, learning disabilities, suspensions, and general hell raising, discipline should be a big issue. It's not. Our students, self-selected survivors, put up with very little disruptive behavior from their peers. Most, after initial skittishness, will report difficulties to their CSP teachers, rather than taking the law into their own hands. We have little drug use, no extortion, no mugging, little classroom disruption, hallway noise or hallwalkers.

We do serve a very difficult population. The positive school climate is created in part from student commitment, and in part from a philosophy radically different from the schools our students have come from. We are a student-centered institution, but far from an undisciplined one. The basic question we ask our students when they face a confrontation is, "Is this worth your high school diploma?" The answer is almost uniformly, "No". When there is a physical confrontation, a principal's suspense is automatic. No if's, and's or but's. For both parties, regardless of fault. The policy leads to some difficult situations, like explaining to the victim mentioned earlier why *he* was being suspended as well as the attacker, but the policy *works*. Almost every seriously disruptive student we admit chalks up one suspension. They rarely go to two. They test the system, find out we mean what we say, then settle in.

Respect is our biggest ally. Students know who is fair. Staff knows who is fair. As long as those two sets of impressions match, and we all act accordingly, the system is seen as fair.

We are not immune to the outside world. Our students suffer from tremendous stress, both internal and external. In addition to the ordinary difficulties of growing up and ordinary family problems, the crushing poverty many of our students live in creates its own difficulties. The neighborhood of the school is rife with violence and drugs and all the other attendant evils. Parents, trying their hardest, are unable to keep the outside world outside. Neither can we. We can provide a safe haven within the building. That's all we can do. When our students are unsafe on the steps of the building, across the street, at the bus stop, it creates an atmosphere of fear that becomes all pervasive.

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The student who is the target child of a parent's violence, the student from a household in turmoil because of a siblings drug abuse, the student under stress from overcrowding and too young parenthood—all are subject to mood swings and have a tendency to lash out at others. It is here that the CSP program shows its' greatest strength. Discipline comes from caring, from the group's tolerance and strength. The magic words, "I need to talk to you" invariably triggers a listening ear. Often that's all we can provide. Most times it is enough.

When listening isn't enough, there are counselors for referrals in and out of school, conferences between teachers, a model for the students of how adults create helping systems, a reassertion of trust. In the best of the CSP situations, the whole group will provide support, advice, a listening ear for a troubled member. Even where help is not sought verbally, students note changes in mood and behavior, and live in a small enough society that most things are known. "She just left her man." "His cousin just got killed." Often these explanations provide the space the student needs, the unspoken sympathy, the additional tolerance.

And we sometimes fail. For a student who fights repeatedly or who brings a weapon to school, there may be a superintendent's suspension hearing. That almost invariably means the student will have to leave the school. We sometimes have students we cannot handle, those who are psychotic, those having schizophrenic episodes, those who are simply unable to consider others, those who are just plain mean. Out of 450 students, we lose an average of five a year to all of the above.

It takes eighteen months to three years to build a CSP class, to get the class to the point at which the students do the socializing and rule giving for the new students. When students begin to spontaneously take care of each other, then the teacher's job becomes the best of all possible worlds, helping students to unlock their intellect and creativity.

The getting there can be a fascinating trip. It does involve giving up some of the teacher protections we take for granted—a completely segregated lunchroom, for instance. Automatic deference. Rules based on outworn tradition. The new rules are so simple, and so hard to obey.

1) **Respect for each other**
2) **Fair treatment for everyone**
3) **Free expression of all ideas**
4) **An absolute prohibition on *ever* putting *anyone* down for *any* reason**

. . .The teachers are special to the students and the students are special to the teachers.

Then there are the little things we do without ever even thinking about them. Three years ago, we started to become an 'in' school for student interns from Brown and Amherst. It has been fascinating to watch the groups meet. Similar in age, they may as well have grown up on different planets. Our students have a natural courtesy with strangers that is often noted by outsiders. So when one of my students—a mechanic not noted for his sensitivity to others—came to me and asked, "What's wrong with these new college kids, anyway? They act funny." I asked why with considerable trepidation, imagining all kinds of problems. "You know, they stay away from you. When they pass by, they act like it'll hurt to get too close." He mimed someone passing him in the narrow corridor, hugging the wall to avoid him. And I realized—we are physically closer than is ordinary in schools. We rarely pass anyone without some physical contact. Part of the creation of a more secure environment in the school is maintained because of physical contact.

The one quality that our students always refer to when answering questions about our school is that they are treated with respect. In addition, we seek situations in which our students will be challenged to describe to strangers what they need, and what the schools need to operate more effectively—including our own. Our students routinely speak with all visitors, and whenever practical, interview new staff. One student, recently, when interviewing a math teacher, asked several practical math questions. The prospective teacher, somewhat puzzled by the approach, asked why, after he had answered the questions. The student replied, "I wanted to make sure you wouldn't teach to some ideal class that isn't there instead of us."

Students never cite the dramatic differences we see. They talk about the simple ones. "They always talk to us like people." "No one puts you down." "They call when you're absent." "Someone always says Hello." And, always, "We're a family."

STAR

STAR is the second absolutely unique aspect of High School Redirection. The reading program entitled *Strategies and Techniques for Advancement in Reading* was founded in 1979 by Lynda Sarnoff in response to another felt need—that our students with reading problems dropped out again, because we did not help them enough with their reading in our conventional programs. Ms. Sarnoff's pilot program involved identifying the 25 poorest readers in the school, placing them in a class together, and immersing them in reading five periods a day. The pilot was successful—students gained an average of 2.4 years in reading that first semester. The next year the program was expanded to include students reading up to a 7.5 grade level in three classes. Students in the non-readers class, those reading below third grade level at entry, continued to make the most dramatic gains, averaging 3.2 years per school year over the next several years, but the students reading over third grade level began graduating in unprecedented numbers, although the reading gains per year averaged only slightly more than one year. Immersion worked. We now have five classes, supported by a full time counselor/coordinator and two resource room classes. Given the number of students who come to us reading at low grade levels, we now restrict STAR to entering students reading at the 6.0 grade level and below.

STAR—Philosophy

Although the philosophy of STAR mirrors that of the rest of the school, our students' unique situation requires some additional attention. In STAR, very strongly and vocally, the responsibility for the students' learning is rooted firmly in the teacher. This is the toughest aspect of STAR for visitors, and some staff, to accept. If any student in my class does not learn how to read, it is *my fault, not the student's*. This kind of teacher responsibility is the antithesis of what has been going on in education for the last thirty years or so. Student failure has been blamed on the student, family, television, "the system," and never on the individual teacher. Yet we are paid to teach.

This responsibility is at the same time more complete and less draconian than it seems. For we have both the tools and the time to do all that has to be done to teach, and we have the common sense to sort out levels of responsibility. The student who appears twice after intake and is never seen again weighs on our conscience only as a faint regret that we were not able to connect. The student who has attended daily for two years—and progressed only two years in reading—is failing only because of our lack of skill in reaching him. We are responsible to this student to make him understand that *we* have failed, not he.

People frequently argue that this philosophy makes mincemeat of personal responsibility. Not so. The student is responsible for attending and actively participating in her education. The problem is that there is no nice clearcut black and white involved, and we are convinced that it is ultimately the teacher who is responsible for the student's education, not the student's responsibility to educate herself. As with discipline the line is a delicate one.

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In tandem with the principle of teacher responsibility is the principle of student educability. Each student can learn. If the student is not learning, the method or modality has not been identified. Are there differences in intellectual capacity? Definitely. Are some students more perceptually impaired than others? Absolutely. Do emotional factors interfere with the education of some students? Yes. But each one can learn. It may be that we don't yet know how to teach to some difficulties, but the capacity is there.

> "Redirection has given me hope. When I went to ..... I thought there was no hope....."
>
> *Jaime Lubin*

For students whose school life has been characterized by failure, high expectations mean the difference between bridging to capacity and leaving a student permanently behind his peers. Our students can think. They can visualize and implement a strategy—they have been protecting themselves in school using strategies for years. Harnessing those skills to apply to academic work is a challenging task for the teacher. Breaking the teacher mold that we have accepted is part of that task.

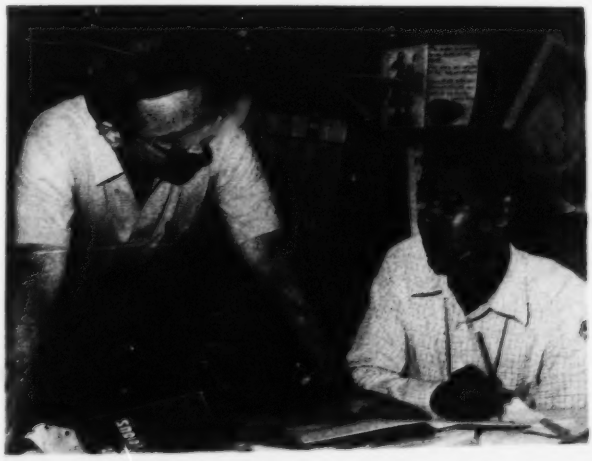
The last principle is perhaps the hardest. The teacher must be willing to risk failure, to try new approaches that may or may not work, to admit to fallibility to students. For most of us any admission of fallibility has been taboo. "This doesn't seem to be working, can anyone help me?" is a sentence teachers have not been taught. We can only fight severe academic delays by working together, staff and students, sharing both joy and grief.

STAR—Special Education Policy

We decided, early on, to avoid becoming part of the regular special education bureaucracy. We refuse to run self-contained classes limited to those labeled learning disabled, preferring to pay for our program out of our tax levy funds, and use special education for the supporting resource rooms. We had both practical, philosophical and emotional reasons for this decision. Practically, our teacher for the non-readers was not a certified special education teacher, and had no wish to become one. Second, we would have to severely limit our intake of non-readers if we took only the already entitled.

Philosophically, we saw the special education bureaucracy as limiting to our students. Expectations were low, dominated by a "what can you do with these students" attitude. We had, and continue to have, strong administrative support for an adversarial stance in regard to the special education bureaucracy, and felt we could be more effective as outsiders. This has proved to be the case. We are comfortable and invulnerable as we bring students to impartial hearings on questions of services and placement. We have never lost a hearing, and have become strong advocates of mainstream education for the learning disabled in alternative settings.

Emotionally, it is important for those of our students who come from special education settings to feel normal. A full-sized class becomes a symbol of being like everyone else. Many have had terrible experiences as special education students, and need substantial re-education about the nature and extent of the problems they face.



STAR—Dealing with Student Reaction to School Failure

Students who are unable to read when they enter high school are not simply illiterate, they bring with them all of the negative baggage engendered by failure. Our program, or any program, attempting to teach illiterate students of high school age will be successful only if there is a recognition of the "onion" properties of the problem. The easy, outer layer is the lack of skill itself. This lack of skill can be remediated using traditional, even old-fashioned methods. The old-fashioned methods can work only if the inner layers are dealt with simultaneously—the doubt, shame, defenses and pain, the confidence, pride, competence

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and strength. Actually, a juggling act may be a better analogy than and onion.

Our students range in age between 16 and 21. Their reading ranges from primer to 6.0 grade level. A student at primer level reading does not know the letters of the alphabet with any consistency, has no sight vocabulary, and, often, does not spell his name correctly consistently. By the time a student reaches a 6.0 reading level, literal comprehension is good. There may be gaps in de-coding skills and skills in structural analysis, but these are compensated for by a good sight vocabulary and sight skills.

Although our firm expectation is that every student can and will learn to read, the reality of time means that we have different expectations of progress for students who come in at various levels of skill. The student who comes to us at primer level, we expect will reach the level of functional literacy by graduation. He will be able to read *The Daily News*. She will be able to fill out a job application and pass a basic skills civil service test, such as the post office exam. He may graduate because of the special test conditions allowed by the state education department for learning disabled students—because he can use the calculator on the math exam, because we can read the reading test to him.

> "If I had to speak of Redirection, I would speak highly of the school. The teachers make school very interesting. They help you find a job. That's what makes kids come and earn credits."
>
> *Katina Stubbs*

For the student who comes to us at 4.5 to 6.0 reading level, our expectation is that the student will achieve full literacy. She will be able to enter a community college and succeed. He will be able to take the more competitive civil service exams, like police officer and firefighter, with a reasonable chance of passing.

Our program, STAR, is a diploma-bound program designed to meet the needs of youngsters reading between primer and 6.0. As important as, or perhaps more important than, the instruction in reading is the underlying philosophy which mandates our dealing with the psychological difficulties that result from illiteracy. We have found that we cannot be successful on an instructional level if we do not recognize and remediate the psychological damage our students have suffered during their years in school. Our school system punishes the deviant students as swiftly and as harshly as did the schools in Dickens' England. We have simply shielded those who mete out the punishment from recognition of what they are doing.

We have become subtle.

Since this is an "onion" problem, then, we approach our students from the vantage point of several different layers simultaneously. On one level, there is the very literal problem of inability to read. The student and the school system have frequently entered a conspiracy of silence regarding the problem. The student is "slow in reading", "does not perform up to capacity", "is deficient". When he comes to us, he simply can't read. We give no relief from this diagnosis, referring to it in class and individually. When a student has made significant progress, we make statements such as "now that you can, read... for the class", or "doesn't that feel good" after a successful effort. Once progress is being made, we continue to remind the student how far he has come. Old students are encouraged to share their observations with new students, i.e. "I used to hide my books, too, but you don't have to worry about that here..." or "If you need help with spelling, ask

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me first. I got help all the time when I was new."

Although this "rubbing her nose in it" approach may seem harsh, it occurs with a corollary—the explanation to the student of exactly what is wrong, and exactly what the plan of attack for correction is. With most students that includes a detailed discussion of any special education testing that has been done. The student whose visual perception is equivalent to a six year old's can use that information to fuel his fight with math operations. He is no longer fighting clouds, but a measurable disability, not much different from not being able to hit a ball.

Behavioral problems that have developed are treated just as matter-of-factly. "That may have been a way of distracting people from the reading problem in our old school, but it won't work here." Not only that, but your fellow students will tolerate only a few, tentative, attempts to disrupt before telling you that they, too, had to give up old defenses—pretty quick—and you will, too. The parameters of acceptable behavior are much wider, though. You won't get into a hassle if you want to keep your hat on, or go to the bathroom, or express your frustration verbally. If you are tempted to lash out physically, there are lots of people around who will help you to regain control—not only teachers, paraprofessionals and administrators, but all of your classmates.

Interestingly enough, outsiders looking in often see only the surface permissiveness, and accuse us of coddling students. Our students see ours as the most demanding situation they have ever been in because, not only do they have to produce, they also have to take responsibility for their own educational and psychological development. Far from shirking the responsibility, our students thrive on it. As one student put it to a visitor, "For the first time in my life, I feel like I have some control over what happens to me. That's freedom."

STAR—Combatting the Conspiracy of Silence

Even the youngest children are aware of their position in the pecking order in school. For children who fail, every day is six hours and twenty minutes of pain—remitted, for some, by other skills, art, music, athletics, mechanics. For others, there is no release. As professionals, we increase failing students' pain almost geometrically by protecting them from the truth about their difficulties. The great majority of the youngsters we teach in STAR have learned one thing from their 10,000 hours. They are stupid.

Illiterates face a lifetime of secrecy. Illiteracy informs every aspect of their lives, especially the most intimate. Telling a wife or lover is even more difficult than telling an employer, and many never do, keeping their secret, and with it the detachment they need to hide their pain. They can never truly relax. So when a teacher enters into a conspiracy with a student to hide a reading problem, the student cooperates enthusiastically. Two things are accomplished. Ridicule from classmates is reduced and public ridicule from the teacher, a co-conspirator, eliminated.

> ". . .The STAR* program is doing very well for me. . ."
>
> *Diane Minor*

Our first job is to define and delineate the reality of the limitations caused by reading difficulties. Regardless of whether the students have been labeled or not, the feelings are the same. Our reading disabled students are as heterogeneous intellectually as any random sampling of students. The difference lies in their own conviction that they are "slow", or even, occasionally, "retarded". Part of our remedy is plain talk—"You are neither slow nor lazy—you can't read."

One of the things our students need to know is that they have tools with which to fight their recalcitrant perceptions. By age sixteen, adult thinking skills are in place, and reading disabled students have been protecting themselves with their mother wit for ten years or more. This intelligence can be readily applied to their reading difficulties **once those difficulties are identified.** One of the most common objections to starting where the student is in terms of reading is that students will feel put down when presented with first grade work. Not a bad theory, if you won't tell the student what the problem is and what she can do to help solve it. Once those things are clear, students have no objection to the most repetitive and babyish of drills.

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STAR—Expectations

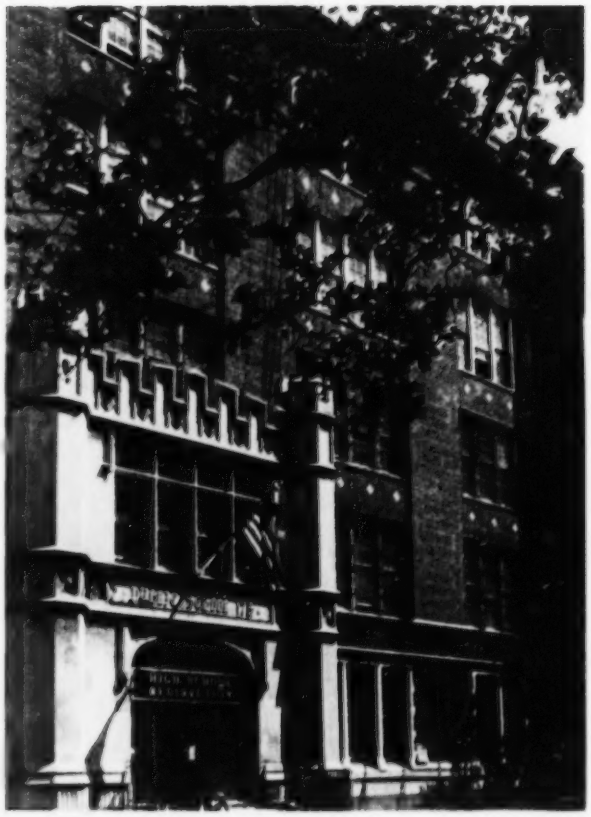
When working with reading disabled students, it is imperative to remember and work with the intellectual capacity of the class rather than the reading level. In all areas, the regular high school curriculum can be presented. Naturally, literature will have to be read to students—not in watered down form, but as written. Children's stories form a large part of our background information. Few of our students were even read to as children. Children's stories and fables can be read to them—five or ten minutes a day on each story—with minimal summaries from previous days. Real analysis can be saved for adult literature. It has taken us years of slow and steady movement to reach Jonathan Swift and Shakespeare, but other schools can start there—it is possible, and fun.

> . . .but Redi is a school that just wants lazy people like me to try hard and to give it all they got.

Writing can start with small index cards. Students write *one* question about *one* thing that puzzled them about a story or a lesson. Positive reinforcement is important for every new activity, as is teacher enthusiasm. "This is a **great** question! Can anyone try to answer it?" Active participation is the goal. Our students are curious and willing to learn. They have been taught that risk will bring on ridicule. Mistakes can never be the basis of learning. Alternate methods of grading and correcting can be found, and do work.

It is because STAR is an alternative to the standard methods of dealing with reading disabled students that we chose to stay outside of the special education and remedial bureaucracies. For our students, the reading disability is a small part of the larger person. It does not define or limit the person, it is simply an obstacle to be overcome. Intellectual capacity remains. So the curriculum is not watered down, but every effort is made to use whatever devices have to be used to bypass the disability while intellectual development takes place at an age-appropriate level.

Does that mean that students are not challenged? No. Once they are comfortable, students can learn a great deal from being challenged. But the challenge cannot include ridicule or sarcasm. Our students have had enough of that.



STAR—A Typical Day

A typical student spends five periods a day in the STAR class. One or two of those periods will be reading, one CSP, one English, a social studies, hygiene, or math depending on need. During reading, the student will work on his individual reading needs, whether those are drill work, drawing, comprehension, spelling, handwriting, writing or editing. CSP follows the regular school curriculum. English encompasses both writing and literature, a regular high school curriculum. Social studies also follows the regular curriculum, using lower reading level texts.

As important as the curriculum is the atmosphere of acceptance. For many of our new students, the idea that every question is treated thoughtfully is a revelation. Hearing their new classmates ask for something as simple as the spelling of a word—and either being told it, or, as likely, having the teacher say, "I think you can get that one." then working with the student to spell the word—is a new experience. Seeing work returned, ungraded, to be edited before grading according to detailed guidelines gives the new student a feeling of control over the work. Most important, everyone cooperates, and no one is ridiculed for any error.

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A typical day begins with greetings, ranging from hearty hellos to gentle chiding for the latecomers. **Each student receives a personal greeting from the teacher every day.** This may seem to be a very small thing, but for our students, who came from large, anonymous schools, and had perfected the art of making themselves insignificant as a protective device, it is no small thing. They are noticed, valued, important. One of the things that amazes us all the time, is the pride our students take in the calls we make to their homes. Sometimes we do daily wake-up calls, sometimes calls when they're absent, sometimes calls to tell their parents how well they're doing. We try to make the first three home contacts positive ones. If we fail to call, the students frequently complain!

Individual instruction in reading is just that. Either a teacher or a paraprofessional works with the student every day on specific reading tasks such as decoding drills, comprehension improvement, writing. Each class has one teacher and one or more paraprofessionals, depending on need. For example, the non-readers' group is supported by two, and sometimes three, paraprofessionals during the reading periods, but none during literature, a whole-class instruction. The low-level math group has three paraprofessionals in addition to the teacher, the mastery-learning social studies class, none. Basic support includes six paraprofessionals for the five classes,but we often have to do with five.

We pull out for resource room most heavily during the reading periods, which lowers the whole-class census considerably. In addition, most of the seniors are programmed out for one or more of the reading periods, further reducing the load. Small group and individual instruction predominate during reading periods, but there is some standard "seat work." We try to keep this minimal, preferring to set up student run pairs or trios to work on specific projects.

Given the size of classes—the tax levy maximum of 34—and the number of adults in each class—2 to 4, depending on need—there is obviously a great deal of independent work required. Since most of our students have been in—and have failed to learn to read in—traditional Title I and remedial settings, we are well aware of the pitfalls of seat work. We use several strategies to try to overcome the deficiencies. Chief among them is a buddy system, designed to take advantage both of natural affiliations and strengths. When it works well, it's a beautiful system. In one case, we had to give two reading awards at graduation, because the two students' learning was so thoroughly intertwined. A student with good de-coding skills can be paired with one with good comprehension skills, each contributing strength to the task.

Less formally, students quickly feel free to seek help from each other. The old students are an invaluable resource, since for them, drill work with a new student provides both traditional reinforcement and the

opportunity for active processing. Two minutes spent questioning an old student may yield several ideas about how to work better with his pupil,and more insights into his own learning style.

Again, although strategies and flow have a great importance, the most important aspect of the instructional approach is the safety within which the student functions. There are no secrets to be kept, and there will be no put downs from other students, no impatience from staff. Each new student is allowed two slips into put-down behavior. These are treated publicly, as they come up, but gently. The approach is "we don't do that to each other here." Usually old students are very helpful in reinforcing by testifying to their own experiences and struggles with the same behavior. After the two free slips, the student must do what others do—including staff—give a public apology. This seems, more than any other factor, to enable the students to learn at what is sometimes an astonishing rate.

The basic premise that we, as teachers, keep in mind is that *not being able to read is a life sentence.* We do whatever we have to do to make sure that the sentence need not be served. Sometimes that means being unconventional. It always means working harder than even the best of us have ever worked before. But the rewards! All of us who are parents know how wonderful that first letter or note from our four- or six- or seven-year-old is. The wonder is almost indescribable. when the letter is from a nineteen year old for whom two years ago there was no hope. More than anything else, we purvey hope.

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POSTSCRIPT

In the welter of ideas spawned by the school restructuring movement, every old idea is out, every new idea is in. There is much that is wonderful in the movement, and much worth keeping from old pedagogy.

When STAR began in 1979, it was basically because we saw that remediation was not working for our students. So we came up with something that has been working for our students. We have sometimes gone astray, by being too conservative, by being too radical. Our students vote with their feet. We always know when they are dissatisfied.

One of our first changes was to dump the lockstep promotional policy we started with. We assumed that our students would love to move up from grade level to grade level and out of STAR. We used our assumptions. We were wrong. The students wanted stability. They wanted to struggle and then enjoy the novel experience of being at the *head* of the class instead of moving from foot to foot. We had tried to impose accepted pedagogy on them, again. They objected, again. This time, *we* changed.

We used the latest in reading theory on our non-readers. They didn't learn, again. We went back to basics. They learned, and continue to learn, using the equivalent of the McGuffie readers.

Try everything. Marry nothing. Listen to your students, even when they only vote with their feet.

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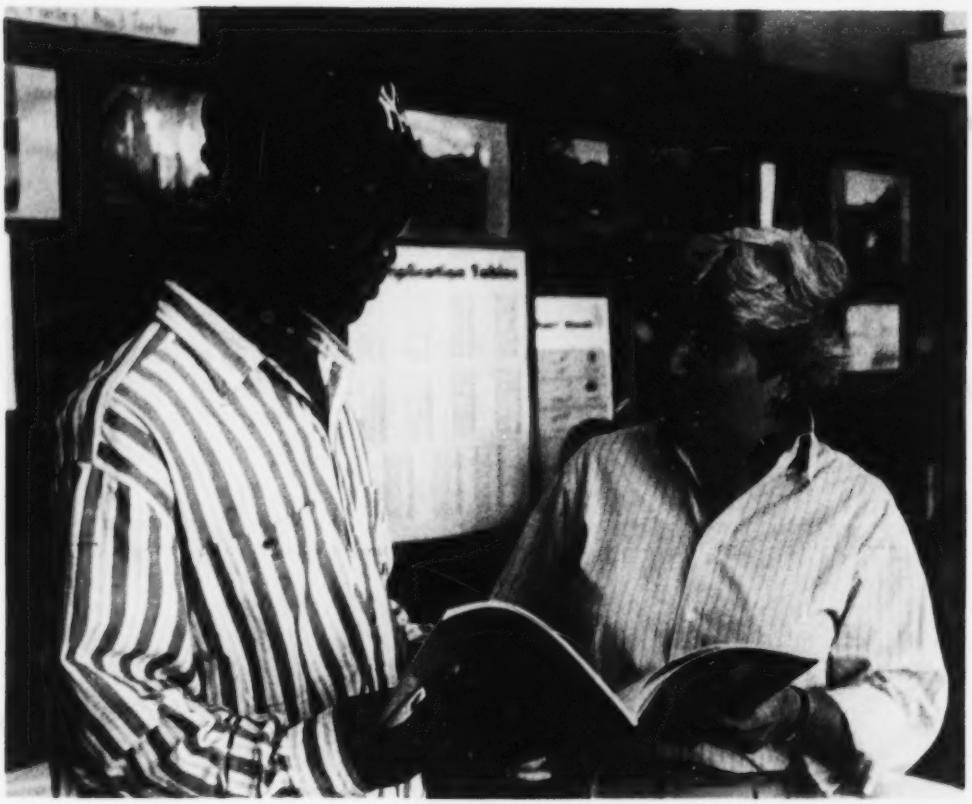
Appendix A: STAR Theory and Curriculum



Overall Concepts

There are a few, basic, philosophical premises on which the STAR program is based:

1. **Every student can learn how to read**
2. **Every teacher is responsible for teaching every student how to read**
3. **If a student fails to learn, it is because the teacher was unable to find a way to teach that student**

It is, in short, a "the buck stops here" philosophy. It is also not as draconian as it first appears. We are not, as teachers, invited to be devastated by our failures, but to learn from them, since we are responsible for them. If we eschewed the responsibility, we would be unable to learn from the mistakes, since it's a rare person who learns from the mistakes of others. It is not an invitation to ignore the outside world, either. The student whose family demands he leave school for a full time job is a loss that we recognize as not wholly our responsibility. But . . . could we have found a part time job for him before the situation reached that state? . . . could we have established better contact with the family that would have made it more difficult for them to have responded in this way? . . . will we recognize the signs with the next student? For the student who merely fails to thrive under our system . . . how could we have met his individual needs better? . . . why did he fail to respond? . . . how can we improve and/or expand the environment to meet his needs? In each case, we try to pinpoint what we could have done to keep the student in school. The focus is not on guilt, but on improvement.

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There are a few, basic, philosophical premises that we impose on the student:

1. **Every student can learn how to read**
2. **Every student is responsible for his or her own education**

Since the student shares all of the information that we have about her, she is in a position to take some control of her literacy. She is encouraged to share her observations about her own learning style and to help us by giving us feedback on what works and what doesn't—and why. He is required to become self-conscious enough to be able to watch the process of reading while it is going on to try to see how he can progress more rapidly.

> The teachers pay full attention to every student in school. They want you to come, because if you don't come they call your house. I'm here because they care.

The other major consideration for our curriculum is that many of our students have been labeled learning-disabled. Disabilities may range from inability to re-visualize words for spelling at all to mild spelling difficulties, from no sight vocabulary to confusion at the middle or end of unfamiliar multi-syllabic words, from totally incomprehensible handwriting to hand writing that must be well-spaced to be understood. In the social-affective sphere, the student may be unable to read social signs, be completely disorganized, be impulsive or react to frustration with violence or withdrawal. Suicidal statements are not unusual, particularly as a student has to invest less energy into protection from discovery.

There is not necessarily a correlation between level of academic functioning and affective-social difficulties. Many very severely dyslexic students are very well organized and have learned to rely on their common sense.* Many high functioning students are very severely impaired socially. Like all the other parts of the riddle of dyslexia, we know little to nothing about the causes of difficulties in the social-affective sphere.

What we do know about the syndrome is how to teach students who have it. The key to success is endless repetition. The lock is never to assume that the student is able to see any relationship in processing language. Seeing that a y changes to i and es is added to produce the plural of words ending in y preceded by a consonant, even seeing it endless times, will not produce the rule for the student. Each time will be a new experience until you point out the relationship and provide the appropriate drill—with reinforcement and review. Is there a failure in adult thinking skills? There doesn't seem to be. For the non-reading group (under 4.0), a favorite activity is doing sophisticated verbal analogies with complete explanations of why they are analogous. Students who can read none of the words have been known to point to the correct answer, having been read the first half of the analogy, but not the first word of the second half. This kind of inexplicable intuitive ability is often ignored, but can be used as a tool in circumventing the students many limitations. One of the reasons for the success of our program is our ability to persuade the student to become an active learner rather than a passive receptor. It makes for a noisier classroom, however.

*If you eliminate retardation and emotional disturbances as causes of reading problems by giving students individual I.Q. and psychological tests, what you have left is the possible dyslexic pool. Background information is needed to verify adequate instruction—defined as the instruction necessary to teach the majority to read. If there is also an I.Q. scatter of 20 points or more along with tested visual-motor integration problems, the diagnosis is dyslexia.

Principles of Teaching and Learning

We serve a diverse group of students in STAR. Our students range in age from 16 to 21; their reading ranges from primer to the 6.0 grade level; their intelligence levels vary as much as any random sample of students; and the causes of their reading problems range from learning disabilities to any number of factors which affected their early education. Having five separate STAR classes allows us to group our students by reading level, and to have a special class of non-readers.

Many students served by STAR can be considered "reading disabled", a category recognized in the educational research literature, but little served by secondary schools. In general, this category may be described as a student whose reading problems are complicated by, and may begin in, a learning disability, as defined by special education workers. Lynne List (1975), in an article in *The Journal of Special Education*, provides an excellent presentation of how reading problems often overlap with learning disabilities.

The primary characteristic of the learning disabled, or dyslexic, reader is his or her inability to associate letter sounds with visual symbols. There is a large research

literature on how individuals learn to read and the steps—which good readers do automatically—with which learning disabled readers have great difficulty. Examples of such literature includes Bryant (1964), Lindsey and Karlen (1979), Hallahan and Kauffman (1978), Pflaum and Bryan (1980), and Stansell (1978). Much of this research on learning disabilities has its roots in the work of Samuel Orton, a physician who first identified the syndrome of dyslexia from patients he had been seeing, and who helped develop a system for teaching such individuals.

The curriculum we have developed for STAR is a compilation of the methods we have found successful over the past ten years. The materials we use in our classes can only be called eclectic. They are selected for attractiveness, appeal to students, and maturity level—whether they are phonics-oriented, or experience-oriented, or look-say oriented is secondary.

Much of what we do is based on Anna Gillingham and Nancy Stillman's "Green Book", a manual of remedial techniques designed to provide dyslexic children with the tools they need to compensate for the disability. We have found these materials useful for a wide range of students in the STAR program. The green book is still the primary source for those who work with learning disabled readers, and it has been the basis for numerous other materials, including the computer phonic systems being sold now.

Whatever system is chosen for teaching can only work, naturally, if you are able to use it, if your students cooperate in the learning process. We gain our student's cooperation by assuming that they are in possession of both a number of competencies and of adult thinking skills that can be put to work to overcome the reading disabilities. In working with our students who are dyslexic, we assume them to be very literal-minded. Well capable of understanding sophisticated concepts, they often run into blocks in inter-relationships that appear to be self-explanatory. So we assume nothing is self-explanatory, all relationships have to be clearly stated. So we do things like keeping a poster of Maslow's triangle hanging in the classroom for quick reference. Since many, if not most, of our students are dealing with gross physical needs, maintaining shelter, acquiring adequate food, clothing, medical care, their thinking frequently tends to be very concrete. We have found, however, that the tendency to concrete thinking is more a function of the environment than of the person, that abstract thinking can be triggered reasonably easily by simply saying, "You're speaking on a strictly physical level on the triangle, try moving up to a higher level." Students can move back and forth between concrete and formal operations depending on the subject matter, and their level of familiarity with the subject matter.

> "Most drop out students have reading problems and this is the place where we get the help we need. That's why I'm here."

This encouraging of an understanding of the learning process is, perhaps, best exemplified by our use of Feuerstein's Instrumental Enrichment program, which teaches an awareness of how human beings think. This encouragement of self awareness of thought fits right in with our philosophy and is part of our two year cycle.

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We also teach Erik Erikson's theory of life stages. Since we teach the same students in block for four periods there ends up being a great deal of interrelationship and referral between classes. In addition, topics such as Erikson and Feuerstein serve as a juxtaposition to the endless drills and remedial work our students have to do so much of. Our students are finally, for part of the day, getting work that is on their intellectual level, if not on their operational level. Perhaps the most horrible thing that happens to our students educationally is that they are denied any standard of education because of their disability.

An example helps to illustrate the teaching principles we are striving for in STAR. In our program, the "true middle", students at the 4.5 to 5.5 grade level in reading, seemed, for years, to be impossible. Passively resistant, implacably isolated, the group seemed to make little progress. They formed the preponderance of our discipline problems, the highest percentage of dropouts, the "eater of teacher" group that couldn't hold a teacher for more than a year, except the one we got who was as hostile and isolated as the class. She lasted two years. Finally, we found someone truly gifted. She fought, struggled and cried over them. It took almost two years before she could get them to sustain a class discussion of more than ten minutes. Then it all clicked. Suddenly, for no apparent reason, they coalesced into a group.

> "Redirection is different from other schools. It has a smaller number of students in one classroom. This school seems friendlier, you meet people with babies, and learn about their problems."
>
> Evelyn Torres

She has invested an enormous amount of work, taking courses, reading, and endlessly discussing, asking for help—what can I do? How can I progress? It has been an intellectual and emotional odyssey by an exceptional teacher. She has won, and we have learned. The factor we never took into consideration was the important one. **This was the only group that had never had a truly excellent teacher.** Was the fault theirs or ours? We thought it was a function of the reading level, blaming, if not the victim, at least the symptoms. Were we wrong? Did we, again, fall victim to the educationalese we like to think we avoid?

Our observations about the group characteristics are accurate. Our method of dealing with the observations has, for years, been inadequate. What we seem to have done with our middle group is to buy into the conspiracy of silence that we so successfully combat with the non-readers. Because the middle students didn't have the opportunity to discuss academic problems, they remained static and well-defended.

This kind of examination and analysis of our own inadequacies is the linchpin of our program. Each year we target one aspect of the program and either try something new for us, or deepen and broaden something we have already put in place. When our students needed more advanced math, one of our teachers took on the job of teaching herself, then teaching our students. For next year, we are planning a geography unit for the whole program based on the cooperative learning experience, which one teacher piloted in social studies last year. Our students generally have not learned under standard pedagogy. We need to constantly try to find what one student described as 'that better way'.

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Issues in Working with Non-Readers

Many students in STAR are dyslexic. In addition, our students often come to us as those who have been uncontrollable in previous settings. The non-readers' class may have 3 to 4 former day school students (an extremely restrictive environment reserved for students who cannot be contained within the regular school special education settings), 4 or so former emotionally handicapped students, 2 from educable mentally retarded (a destructive label that is still used), 10 or more from self contained classes for the learning disabled, with the remainder resource room or unclassified. They are frequently coming into a whole class environment for the first time in six to ten years. Our approach, ignoring many of the standard rules and valuing things that were not much considered in their old settings, like mutual respect, creates a state of disequilibrium that often works to our advantage. When, and if, the student begins to try "the tricks", he finds the response to be different not only from staff, but also from students. There is no peer approval. It creates a situation in which behavior modification is part of the environment, needing no tokens or elaborate reward systems. Although disruption is simply not tolerated, other forms of rebellion may be ignored for months before a response is seen.

Many assumptions are made about dyslexia, but precious little is known about the working of the brain that causes such painful difficulty in processing language. What we *know*, clinically, is that it requires almost endless repetition, and strong relationship linkages to overcome the dyslexic's processing problems. The youngster must become an extremely active learner to compensate for the deficit, whatever it's cause.

Concept formation requires accurate and swift sensory input. For the dyslexic, the sensory field is often partial and blurred. Auditory discrimination may be grossly deficient, visual motor integration years below expected level of functioning, ability to organize time and stimuli almost non-existent. Yet information about these difficulties, which could at least go far in explaining the why of things that the youngster can clearly see—that other people learn better and faster—is routinely kept even from late adolescent and adult dyslexics.

Given a relatively concrete and measurable problem, like a student who writes on only half of the page, the left or right, because of serious visual-motor integration problems, the student has a much better chance of correcting it if he knows what he is fighting. Sharing the available information is an approach rarely tried on the theory that it would be too discouraging and painful. **Not being able to read** is discouraging and painful.

The study of dyslexia is an evolving field. One of the primary needs of those working in the field is contact with peers, even those at the same experiential level, so that they do not fall into the trap of either lowered expectations or blaming the victim. Staff development should include regional workshops and symposia to gain varied input. Intervisitation is another important aspect of staff development, often overlooked.

Motivation

As a self-selected group,our students are assumed to be intrinsically motivated. Motivation can crash against boredom, fear, and any number of other forces. As with parents, we try to keep our early phone contacts with students positive. Each student is called every time he is absent, however. The student is asked for, and, if unavailable, a message regarding absences is left with the parent. Sometimes, students will request that calls not be made to the home. In that case, the student must call the teacher to inform her of the absence the evening before the absence or the morning of the absence. If this procedure is abused, the

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student is informed and feedback is sought before calls to the home are resumed, unless, of course, the student simply stops coming to school. Every student has the home telephone number of his or her CSP teacher. There has never been a case of this privilege being abused. It is, indeed, most prized.

Once a student is in class regularly, her input into and understanding of her educational needs are often enough to keep motivation high. Additionally, there are many very small, but important, classroom management techniques that contribute to a positive atmosphere.

-each student is greeted by name as she arrives each day

-at some point in the day, an invitation to talk is given, i.e. "How's the baby?": "Are you and mom still fussing at each other?": "Where did you go job hunting yesterday?"

-anger and exasperation are expressed openly—by both staff and students

-apologies for behavior that have caused pain are given by staff

-students are helped to learn to apologize, particularly when behavior is regretted, but not the context or idea

-if at all possible, adjustments to schedule are made if a student wishes to avoid class with a particular teacher

-teachers are familiar enough with students' individual assignments that references can be made without checking notes, i.e. "That was an excellent essay you wrote yesterday. Find it on the desk and make a perfect copy today." or, "You were drawing the termite article yesterday. Show me how you're doing before you start today."

-teachers travel to students rather than having students come to the desk—best, no desk

The most important of the motivators is the measurable progress students make, reasonably rapidly, in their area of greatest need—reading and writing. Second in importance is the adult status given the student. Third is the conscious effort to keep the curriculum on the students' intellectual level rather than her operational processing level.

Testing of Reading and Writing Disabilities

Our students range from those who simply do not know the letters of the alphabet to those whose major interference is disorganization and panic. The range includes:

1. **Students who are unable to read because they cannot remember the strategies needed to decode the individual words—the sound of letters, sight words, rules**
2. **Students who cannot read because they cannot visually pin anything to a constant. This is somewhat like learninng Chinese without a key to the ideographs. The letters and words move around in a random pattern for which there is no key. The simplistic description of this student is that he sees "b" for "d", "saw" for "was". As a matter of fact, he does, but with no consistency. If he always reversed, he would have something to hold onto. This student has no idea that others have a more stable field of vision.**
3. **Students who can decode and visualize adequately, but have no visual imagination and therefore cannot comprehend more than a sentence or two.**
4. **Students who have adequate decoding skills and visualization, who have visual imagination, but cannot read because their organizational deficit causes panic—and processing shuts down.**

Writing difficulties include:

1. **Students who are unable to write at all—for whom the physical act of handwriting is an overwhelming burden.**
2. **Students who cannot write because they cannot spell.**
3. **Students who cannot write because thy cannot translate spoken syntax into written form. What they write is so syntactically incorrect that it's incomprehensible.**
4. **Students who cannot write because of a level of disorganization that makes it impossible to hold a thought or concept long enough to finish it or relate it to another thought.**

Most difficult to work with within the range are the students who read at or below the first grade level, because of the severity of visual perceptual problems, and, interestingly, those reading at about the 5th or 6th grade level who have no visual imagination. For the first group, we have the necessary knowledge and skills, but often not enough time. The second group we have failed to develop the skills to help adequately. Our successes and failures seem to be as

random as the first grade level student's vision. Our methods and techniques work erratically, if at all. We have also had the most teacher turnover in this group, which may be a contributing factor.

The visually-perceptually handicapped group generally score between second and fourth grade reading level. This group tends to have some sight vocabulary and good avoidance skills—they cover up their illiteracy very well. This is a reasonably easy group to teach because the techniques of correcting visual problems are well defined. Make them see what they see, and then correct, a technique that works as well for dyslexics as for the cross-eyed. The last group—the disorganization—panic group—is often the easiest to remediate, because the skills were there, you simply need to help to remove the block that exists between the student and the learning.

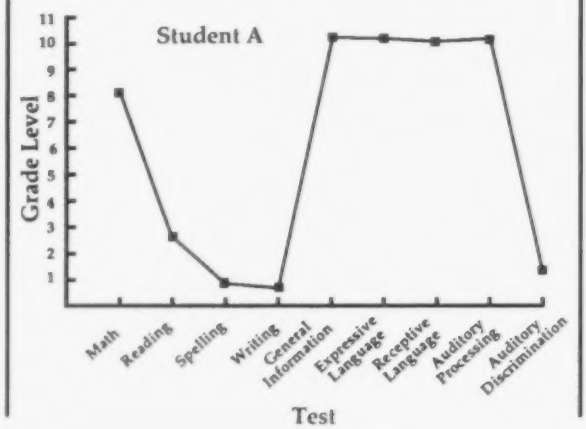
Writing difficulties follow basically the same range. Most difficult in writing, however, are the students with syntactical and organizational deficits. Spelling and handwriting deficits respond well to a well-defined protocol.

> "Redirection gives students a chance to learn at their own pace and improve their skills."
>
> *Anderson Grandison*

The following chart graphs the entering scores for two students in the primer to third grade level reading groups. Most of the tests are scored in grade level. Where age level is used, a direct translation is made int the grade level for that age. Expressive language and auditory processing are informal (teacher estimate). On the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS), both youngsters fall into normal range, but both score under 100 in scaled scores. Youngster A has an 80 point range on the WAIS, a very significant scatter. His highest sub-test was similarities, reflecting abstract thinking. He scored well into the superior range. His verbal scores were strongest. Youngster B scored better on the performance section, with block design—again an abstract thinking subtest—as the highest score. The range was smaller—30 points—but still significant. This is a much more typical profile, although slightly higher in receptive language and general information than average.

Chart 1

Scores of the Two Sample Students on the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS)



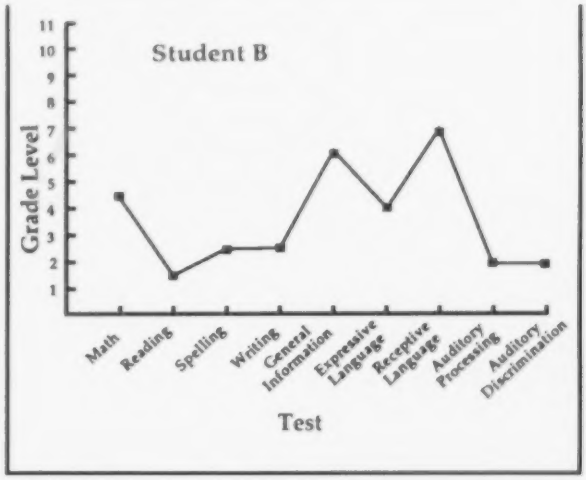


Chart 2 shows student A's progress as of June, 1987 after a September, 1986 entry into the program. Initial testing was done in May, 1986 during application.

The whole testing process for special education is often almost as much of a mystery to teachers as it is to parents and students. There are roughly four types that must be given, by law, before a student is placed. Standard individual I.Q. tests, psychological tests, educational achievement tests and perceptual tests are all required. In addition, a social history is done with the parent and teachers of the student are supposed to be consulted. In reality, testing personnel are required to report only to each other, as long as they can document an effort to contact the parent to report on test results.

One of the things we do, routinely, is make sure that every eligible person takes part in the testing procedure, and that everyone is informed, in language that can be understood, of the test results. Every step of the procedure is explained to the students, along with the possible outcomes and resources for recourse if there is a conflict about placement. If hearings are necessary, we arrange for legal representation, and a staff member accompanies the student and parent to the hearing.

Our last hearing involved a student who had been assigned to day school (severely emotionally disturbed). After two brief visits to the new school, he decided not to return. A few months later, someone on the street told him about Redirection's reading program, and he decided to try school again. Since nobody in the New York City school system ever talks to anyone else, he was able to go back to his old school for proof of discharge. He had a friend take the intake reading test for him. The friend was a poor reader, but a lot better than he was. He was assigned to a middle level remedial class. It took our bureaucracy almost a month to place him correctly with a primer group. He turned out to be perhaps the most hard-working student we have ever had in our program, but terribly disabled. When we finally got his special education records and arranged for testing, he had been with us for six months. We were halfway through the term we would spend on the short 'a' sound. He knew all of his consonants and had a stable sight vocabulary of about 40 words. The tests were a disaster. Reading was first grade level, math 5th or 6th. Writing was non-existent. In the testing situation he couldn't even spell his street name, something he could usually do. His visual-motor integration was equivalent to an eight year old's—this same youngster would win a Golden Gloves championship within six months.

Chart 2

Progress of Sample Student A
from May 1986 to June 1987
on the WAIS Scale

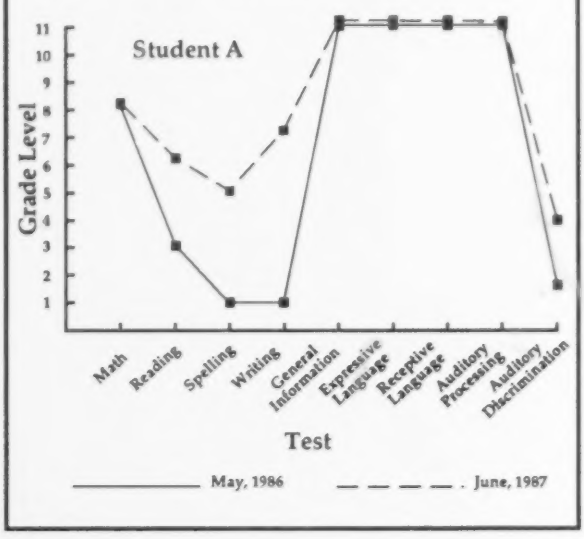
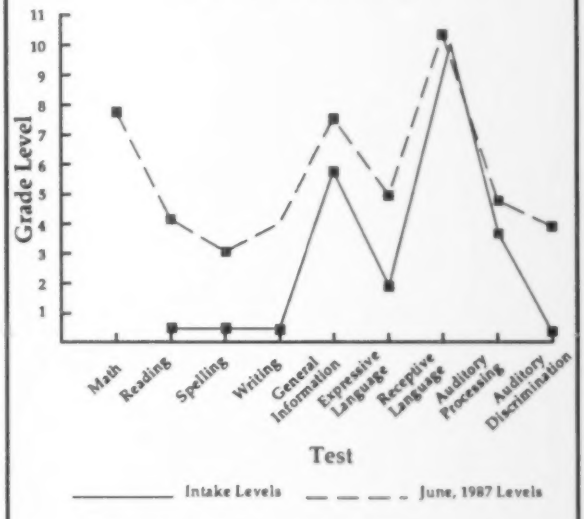


Chart 3

Primer Level Student on whom Hearing
was Held for Placement



Even with a history of no disciplinary problems in the six months in our school, the testing team was adamant that he should go back to day school to a non-diploma bound program. The youngster, a very tough street kid, kept repeating that he wasn't stupid, he could learn here, and no one had the right to tell him he couldn't try. The student ended up in tears of frustration. Several months and a lawyer later, there was no difficulty in getting him resource room designation.

For the youngster, this process, while incredibly painful, gave him a sense that he had some power, that there were things about his education over which he had some control, that he did not have to be a victim.

Helping our youngsters build self-esteem is one of the many strands that have to be held simultaneously. Throughout the period of their lives, when the sense of self as competent should be developing, most of our students have been in an impossible situation. The culture provides only one basic arena for success

during this period—the school. Even for those who will later develop great skill in other areas—music, art, athletics—the development of those skills is still in the infant stages. Given an environment in which the student is destined to fail continuously, a great toll is taken on the student's self-esteem.

Our students tend to be the survivors of this group, those who have refused to relinquish a vision of themselves both as learners and as members of the larger society—as one student put it, "I want to have a checking account. I want to have bills come for me in the mail." But, educationally, they react much like physically battered children. Always expecting the next blow, they flinch at loud voices and quick movements. Their alertness to the environment, to anticipate the next attack, takes a tremendous toll on the ability to concentrate. The healing and rebuilding process is slow.

Part of the function of the adolescent period is to rebuild and recover from the deficiencies that are left after the initial stages of early and middle childhood. Adolescence provides the opportunity to move outside the family to find positive reinforcement and challenges that may have been denied in the earlier environment. It's another start, another opportunity to develop, from a differing perspective, the basic trust that is the underpinning of good psychological health. Often, the deficiencies are societal. In one of our classes there are no fewer than three students being raised by great-grandmothers, the youngest of whom is 78. All of these youngsters express feelings of abandonment. Adult acceptance has to replace anger before the next stage can be mastered.

We never know whether we spend too much time explaining the affective elements of our program to others. We certainly spend and enormous amount of both formal and informal staff time trying to figure out how to help students to function better psychologically. Our principles are simple, based on traditional education and mainstream psychology. Yet the most frequent oojection to attempting to replicate the program is that we have special teachers. We think we are special, but only because we agree on a simple set of principles and have an enormous freedom to try anything that works.

Some of those principles have been alluded to earlier, under goals and objectives, but bear repeating. Others have not been mentioned explicitly, and should be.

-every student can learn to read

-teach every minute of every period, every day

-every other human being is entitled to respect

-each of us has an obligation to continue to learn

-if a student fails to learn, it is because we have failed to teach

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■ ■ Yes, there should be more schools like Redirection because the teachers care about you. ■ ■

Curriculum—Daily Protocols and Student Contracts

For individual instruction in reading, each teacher establishes a protocol that varies little from day to day. Each student has a contract, which clearly states general expectations for attendance and work for the cycle. Weekly contracts list the assignments that will help the student to reach an overall objective for the cycle.

A simple contract for the cycle would be:

During Cycle _____, I can earn 50 points be attending 90% of the time, and completing all of my assignments.

My goal for the cycle is _____.

I can achieve it by _____.

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A weekly contract might be:

Objective for week: _____

Assignments: _____

_____

For a total non-reader, an 80 minute period might include:

-letter drills (10 minutes)

-handwriting practice (10 minutes)

-workbook assignments/writing (20 minutes)

-group spelling/tracing (15 minutes)

-word decoding (5 minutes)

-computer drills for reinforcement (10 minutes)

-group discussion (10 minutes)

For that same reader, the cycle objective might be to learn the sounds of all of the consonants and short a sound with automatic response. A cycle is ten weeks. For the week above, the objective might be to differentiate between z and x (often confused) and continue reinforcement of the short a sound. All letter drills, handwriting practice, workbook assignments, word decoding and computer drills would primarily concentrate on z and x, with the short a as a continuing strand.

For a student who has reached a 6th grade reading level, such as student A in Chart 2, the daily protocol would be significantly different. In the same 80 minutes, he would:

-do sound drills as a tutor for a non-reading student

-school autobiography entry—work processor (20-30 minutes)

-word decoding with buddy (15 minutes)

-consonant spelling (10 minutes)

-handwriting practice (10 minutes)

> "...I would tell them how much fun it is. We learn, but we have fun while we learn."
>
> Edgar Dawson

The goal for the cycle would be mastery of the first 300 words of the list of the 1000 most frequently used words. In that case, both consonant spelling and handwriting would concentrate on the words misspelled on the pre-test. The continuing strand for spelling in writing would be a Speller disk containing those 300 words for checking before use of the general Speller dictionary disk. A further use of autobiography entries would be affective—the integration of a more positive self image into the strengths already present in the personality. This long-term goal would be discussed explicitly, but not written on the contract in the interests of privacy.

The non-reader in this case is given much more teacher time than student A. There is a weaning process to independence here, since student A, at some time in his time with us was given as much time as the non-reader is being given now. Size of class and lack of time for them are two of our student's primary complaints, however.

Goals and Objectives—Cognitive

Students will learn to de-code automatically.

-memorize letter names

-memorize letter sounds

-reproduce letter sounds

-reproduce letter sounds in context

-reproduce variant vowel sounds

-apply letter sound knowledge to unfamiliar words of one syllable

-identify stress in a word

-apply the use of the schwa to unstressed syllables

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-decode phonetically words of two or more syllables

-read phonetically based sentences, applying phonetic knowledge

-read phonetically based stories, applying phonetic knowledge

-read non-phonetic sentences, applying phonetic knowledge

-read non-phonetic stories, applying phonetic knowledge

-apply phonetic principles to unstructured vocabulary, over a 4th grade level

"I came from.....High School. I was not learning that much there. But at Redirection the people care for you. If you are having a baby they help you with your child. They help you get a decent job. And they help you through a lot of problems in your household."

Sherrie Palmer

Students will apply principles of structural analysis to reading tasks.

-identify syllables

-define syllables inductively

-classify syllables into different types

-identify the characteristics of different types of syllables

-define the different types of syllables

-identify syllables by type

-separate words into two syllables

-identify different methods of separation

-induce the rules that govern separation

-identify prefixes and suffixes

-distinguish the root word from the prefix and suffix

Students will visualize literal meaning.

-describe the events in a story

-sequence the events in a story

-reproduce descriptions used in a story

-draw the events in a story

-infer an extension to a story

-repeat the story to another

-summarize the story in writing

-re-write the story with a different ending

Students will describe various levels of meaning.

-identify literal meaning

-explain the theme

-distinguish symbolic meaning

-compare characterizations

-infer other thoughts and feelings

-analyze motivations

-extend principles to and from own experience

Students will explain the meaning of unfamiliar factual material.

-infer the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary from context

-break down unfamiliar sentence constructions to extract meaning

-analyze the opening paragraph to ensure adequate background for understanding

-identify the known to help to understand the unknown

-draw the events in the article, if visual

-re-write difficult sentences

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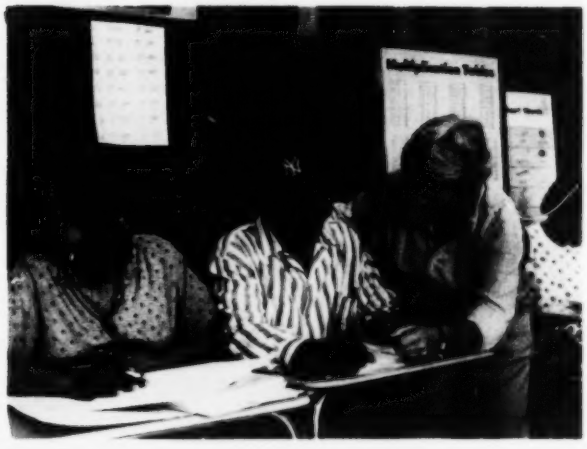

Students will spell adequately.

- **-apply phonetic principles to spelling**
- **-apply structural analysis principles to spelling**
- **-use reference books and resources**
- **-trace non-phonetic words**
- **-write words in the air, using gross motor skills**
- **-write words on hand or arm**
- **-walk out words 6 to 12 feet high**

Students will develop adequate handwriting.

- **-reproduce each letter correctly**
- **-repeat each letter until automatic**
- **-write letter 3-4 feet high on a wall**
- **-walk out letter 6-12 feet high, if difficulty continues**
- **-reproduce connected letters until automatic**
- **-change spacing of writing for ease of reading**

Students will write adequately.

- **-write extensively in free writing**
- **-after 15-30 assignments, begin to self-edit for spelling, sentence structure**
- **-read writing out loud to self-correct**
- **-read writing of self and other with other student to extend self correction**
- **-categorize writing into paragraph form**
- **-formalize paragraphing into lead and supporting sentences**
- **-write outlines for three or more paragraphs**
- **-write formal theme, edit, re-edit, submit, re-write**

Goals and Objectives—Affective

Students will develop strategies for learning effectively.

- **-abandon defensive strategies as they become unnecessary**
- **-develop replacement strategies that support active processing**
- **-listen critically**
- **-question premises**
- **-question for information**
- **-question for unknown vocabulary**
- **-risk failure in protected environments**
- **-accept occasional failure**
- **-accept success**
- **-share new learning**
- **-reject negative characterizations from any source**
- **-demand respect as a learner—for both knowledge and ignorance**

> "I would tell them to go ahead and start other schools like Redirection because this school gives us students a fair opportunity. I would describe High School Redirection as an adult school for students that need extra help that they couldn't get in other high schools."
>
> *Patrice Clark*

Students will identify and compensate for emotional difficulties caused by learning difficulties.

- **-tells significant others of learning problems**
- **-defines parameters of acceptable behavior from others**
- **-identifies behavior directly related to learning problems**
- **-decides to retain or reject behavior**
- **-integrates understanding of disability into whole person**

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-identifies limitation and necessary compensations

-helps others to come to terms with disabilities

-Students will continue the psychological growth connected with the stages of late adolescence.

-develops a more stable sense of identity

-relates to others on an intimate level

-decides on tentative vocation

-takes responsibility for the consequences of actions

-identifies values

-adjusts behavior to conform to philosophical position

-cares for children

-provides a stable, loving environment for children

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Sample Lessons

1. Non-Reader

letter drills—see attached Figure 1.

Instructional Objective

The student will correctly identify the letter name, the key words and the letter sound 100% of the time for mastery

Process

The cards are presented to the student in a different order every day, with a new card being offered as soon as mastery is reached on three tries on the previous cards

Other Activities

Good math students often like to time themselves and graph results

For some students, keeping a list of the letters and a list of the words that she can spell beginning with the letter works as well as graphing

* * * * *

Discussion

Because of the constant repetition for over-learning, this is a really boring activity. It also takes about two years to create a classroom atmosphere in which this activity will meet with no or minimal resistance. It looks like baby work. It is baby work. Students have learned that if they object to things that look like baby work they can count on teacher embarrassment to enable them to evade it.

-start with your most cooperative (or most desperate) student

-explain why this work is needed and how it will help

-contract for a specific length of time—5 minutes a day for two weeks, for example

-if, at the end of two weeks, the student doesn't see progress, you will stop

2. Non-Reader

handwriting practice—see attached Figure 2.

Instructional Objective

The student will copy, in size and configuration, the letter and/or word assigned or selected until size and configuration can be duplicated in the absence of a model

Process

Usually, with adolescent students, working on the signature first works best. Students know this to be a deficiency. Present the student with the telephone book (or part) and two contrasting colored markers. Explain that you will gradually reduce the size, but that it is important to begin as large as the sample. When the time comes to reduce the size, you will reduce the sample. Have the student copy faithfully in your presence. When a satisfactory copy is made, assign six more and leave. When the student is finished return and show him how to correct his copies with the contrasting color.

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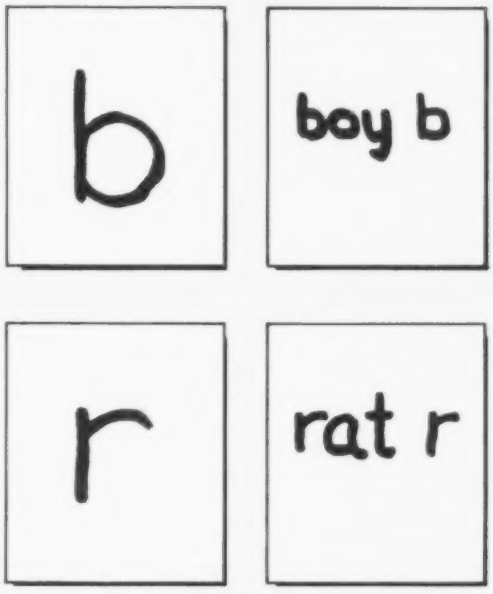
Figure 1

Sample of Cards
Used for Letter Drills



Other Activities

You may, with severely dysgraphic students, have to have the student walk out an 8 to 12 foot outline of the letter or word.

After a student has some proficiency, he may want to copy his compositions in his best handwriting. This can be done at handwriting time, not editing time.

* * * * *

Discussion

Interestingly enough, there is little resistance to these activities, even to walking the letters out, which the students find fascinating. Some students may seize on this to avoid more painful activities, in much the same way that they used to copy whole workbooks to avoid failure. That's why re-copying activities should be limited to handwriting time.

3. Non-Reader

writing

Instructional Objective

The student will write a sample sentence using 'where'and 'were' under teacher direction. Using these sentences as a guide, the student will compose four more sentences for each word. alternating the 'where' and 'were' sentences.

Process

Ideally, each student will have a notebook with a section for writing. Some students may find it hard to remember the whole sentence while struggling with spelling. At this level, spell any word at the student's request. Use of the tape recorder as a memory guide can be extremely helpful to the student who can't remember the whole sentence.

Other Activities

A whole column of 'where' and 'were' in random order for reading, with each try timed and errors tallied for graphing. This works best for math-minded students, but is also a good activity for the disorganized.

Students can construct phrases containing both words—where we were, were here where we, etc. with the requirement that sentences be constructed around the phrase.

* * * * *

Discussion

This is a good place to introduce independent use of the tape recorder, which will be used extensively for writing. There are few pitfalls in this activity, which requires that the student process actively, and it is not usually resisted. The biggest problem is trying to get too sophisticated too fast. The student struggling with 'were' and 'where' does not need to work on 'there' 'their' and 'they're' for a few months.

4. Non-Reader

spelling/tracing

Instructional Objective

Students will trace words misspelled on a pre-test from a raised, cursive sample. The word will be considered mastered when it can be spelled correctly three days in a row without re-tracing.

Process

Using an 8 1/2 by 14 inch unlined paper placed on a piece of coarse sandpaper, the teacher writes the misspelled word in cursive. The student uses the fore and middle finger of her preferred hand to carefully trace the word while saying the word out loud. N.B. Part of the process is being sure to have the student *say the word*, not the letters.

Figure 2

Example of Student Practicing Writing
the Letter V
on a Page from the V Section
of the Telephone Book

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Other Activities

The same technique can be used with a rigid box of at least 15 by 20 inches, using sand or salt as the medium. In this case, the student is not tracing, but copying from a sample, or working from memory for reinforcement. This must be a well supervised activity.

For words the student finds particularly recalcitrant, the technique of walking out 6 to 12 feet high works well.

* * * * *

Discussion

This tracing technique is one of the multi-sensory techniques pioneered by Grace Fernald, building on Anna Gillingham's work. Gillingham tended to use copying repeatedly as her multi-sensory technique of choice. What we seem to be trying to do with youngsters who have profound reading difficulties is to form other pathways, alternate way for them to remember what they cannot remember using ordinary means. It is a process of re-teaching.

5. Non-Reader

word decoding—see attached Figure 3.

Instructional Objective

Student will identify the pattern presented in each word presented, and will use that information as the key for decoding the word.

Process

Glass analysis cards or equivalent

Present the key card for each section. Say the sound for the student. Have the student repeat the phoneme until the sounds are accurate. Present the first card, having the student identify the targeted phoneme. If the student can then identify the word, the card is complete. If not, identify the missing sound and have the student blend the sound and the phoneme. Continue the same process with words of more than one syllable.

Other Activities

Spelling of the easiest words in the phoneme group.

Targeting the change in words triggered by the addition of a prefix or suffix as a relationship to be made explicit is a good idea. Learning disabled students often fail to see that "cooking" has the same base as "cooked." This connection needs constant reinforcement.

* * * * *

Discussion

This is a teacher intensive activity, with the greatest danger of teacher dominance/student passivity. This can easily become a rote activity for the student with little long-term memory. Have the student identify differences and become actively involved. The cost of these materials is high—about $360.00 a set.

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> I would tell the people of other cities to go ahead and start a school like Redirection. Redirection is a very good school for students who think they can't make it in other schools. The teachers are like parents. They really encourage the students and motivate them. On the other hand the student feels confident about himself. And that is something very good for a school to do. My opinion is we should have schools like Redirection all over the U.S.

6. Non-Reader

computer drills

Instructional Objective

Students will review learned material on word decoding and letter sounds using available software.

Process

Unisis' *Autoskills*
Lead's *Superlead*

Both programs provide endless reinforcement for visual and auditory phonics. *Superlead* has more variety but a smaller range, ending at about the third grade level. *Autoskills* goes through the eighth grade level, and includes paragraph reading. IBM's PAL has also been highly recommended, but requires the very expensive IBM equipment.

Other Activities

A useful follow-up for the *Superlead* is the *Analogies* program, which emphasizes sight words.

* * * * *

Discussion

There is a great deal of computer garbage on the market. We have had a great deal of trouble with Unisis' equipment, while the Apple IIe goes on, and on, and on, with *no down time* for the last six years. If there is difficulty getting computer time from a possessive computer teacher, New York City now *mandates* full-day use of computers, with opportunities for classroom teachers, and other systems may have similar rules. Grant money is available for computers, as well as pilot opportunities for those willing to do the record-keeping required.

7. Student A (Reader)

letter drills

Instructional Objective

Student will improve auditory discrimination skills by processing other student's answers for accuracy. Process Student will present cards to learner. The learner will say the letter, then the sound, then the key word. The order should always be the same. If the sound is inaccurate, the tutor will repeat the sound several times, slowly, giving the key word each time. For the tutor, this is an exercise in recovery from memory, checking against the other student's presentation, re-checking, and editing if necessary. Doubts or conflicts will be brought to a staff member only after all other methods have been exhausted, including creating a list of words with the same sound for further checking.

* * * * *

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Figure 3

Example of Drills Used to Help Students
Decode Words into Subparts

ama	mini	arrhythmia
amaryl	minium	political
amaryllis	condominium	canonical
		analysis
appa	cannib	anaconda
apparat	cannibal	noncommittal
apparatus	cannibalis	alcoholic
	cannibalistic	optimistic
Cama		catalytic
Camaril	ana	analytic
Camarillo	anatom	amaryllis
	anatomic	apparatus
idi	anatomical	analytical
idiot		anatomical
idiotic		condominium

---

acquit	alumnus	acquittal	Olympic
annul	amalgam	uncommon	alpaca
submit	Atlantic	italics	hypnotic
succumb	ballistic	opossum	macadam
collapse	Calcutta	submissive	arrhythmic
discuss	catalpa	tobacco	synopsis
atomic	colossal	Wisconsin	Columbus
Algonquin	fantastic	calypso	Cohasset
accustom	fanatic	Morocco	Nagasaki
agnostic	inactive	Apollo	Tuscumbia

Discussion

Some students are wonderful at this, some need a great deal of supervision. For the student being tutored, this supplements, but does not replace, teacher time on the same activity. It's helpful if the teacher sees this activity as affective rather than cognitive for the student being tutored. He is being forced to deal with both grade level and potential failure with a peer, and there will be minimal cognitive gain, at least initially.

For the tutor, this is a foray into treating others as he *would like to have been treated*. The biggest difficulty is premature intervention. For all of his previous school career, the tutor was not allowed sufficient time to try to process information himself. His own interventions will reflect this timing. The learner will be encouraged to tell the tutor when he is impatient.

8. Student A (Reader)

school autobiography

Instructional Objective

Students will write as full an account of previous school experiences as memory will allow, with a minimum of 500 words.

Process

Aimed at students who have passed the Regents' Competency test in writing, this represents the first sustained writing task for the student. The word processor with its' spell check makes this a much less daunting project than first appears. There may be days when little or nothing is done but writing.

The student should use the tape recorder as a memory source, bringing one home, if possible, or using one available at home for stream of consciousness memory to use as a base.

* * * * *

Discussion

Some students love to write and have a natural affinity for it. For others, a grocery list and Christmas cards may be the expected level of life-long functioning. This activity can mark a watershed, a definite line between life before reading and life after reading. It can also help a student to overcome the guilt that the child takes on for any failure. Psychologically, the writing task can help to purge the past and begin anew.

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9. Student A (Reader)

word decoding—see attached Figure 3.

Instructional Objective

The student will develop facility at decoding multi-syllabic words by decoding 20 to 30 words a day in cooperation with a buddy. Mastery will be 98% accuracy on a level.

Process

Both students will work together, re-writing the words in syllables and identifying the syllables that prevent decoding. Once all possible words have been decoded, the teacher is called to hear the words or help with words not solved.

Other Activities

Extension by using some of the words in sentences.

Circling the commonalities in words, then checking to see if the commonality qualifies as a prefix, suffix or root, and its' meaning.

* * * * *

Discussion

Ruth Worden Frank's *Phonetic Reading Chain* is an invaluable resource with almost unlimited uses. It also has the advantage of being reasonably inexpensive at under $60 for the set of eight from Media Materials. You will need several copies and several copies of your most used books. For the classic dyslexic, like student A, figuring out what the words are is really *all*. Comprehension is no problem after that. Students love this activity, which is both cooperative and competitive.

10. Student A (Reader)

consonant spelling

Instructional Objective

Student will spell multi-syllabic words using the sound of the consonants only as a guide to the *Word Finder* dictionary.

Process

This is a verbal assignment project, which means that the teacher must have a list of words ready to assign. In the beginning, processing and finding the word may take five minutes or more. The word may have to be given several times. For example, a word like 'beginning' has to be processed as three syllables with the consonants 'bgnng.' When you look up that combination, you find only the word 'beginning'. 'gm' will give you gam, gamma, game, gamy, Guam—to start.

Other Activities

This is a good 'do now' activity for the whole class. It focuses on both auditory discrimination and attention.

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Have students try to 'fill in the blanks' with the vowels, using the schwa symbol where appropriate. This, too, is very helpful for auditory discrimination, especially for those troublesome vowels.

* * * * *

Discussion

This is a wonderful cure for the terrible speller. It helps to increase auditory attention span, too. In our classes, it's a 'shout across the room' activity, with the student spelling the word out to the teacher where ever, and the teacher countering with a new word.

Like handwriting practice, it's a popular activity, but this time because, after a period of orientation, we try to stay on the outside edge of the student's vocabulary.

11. Students with Special Problems

speech to print comprehension transfer

Instructional Objective

Student will identify a central theme, encoding the theme and all supporting information in writing.

Process

Student will listen to a short story, either read by a staff member or on tape. Student will then discuss the story with a staff member, identifying theme and the details that support the theme. On a second run through of the information, the student and staff member will make notes on the oral presentation. The student will then write a report on the story, incorporating all of the information in the notes. There will be at least three drafts, incorporating as much information as can be gleaned, both literally and inferentially.

* * * * *

Discussion

The object here is to have the student create her own schema for a story presented orally, since oral language is the student's strength. Often, with a student like this, two or three encoding experiences will produce an 'aha' reaction. The transfer from print to meaning will be made clear, and the road to dramatic improvement opened.

12. Student with Special Problems

focusing

Instructional Objective

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Student will identify time difficulties by keeping a log of daily activities, concentrating with time on task.

Process

Staff member will help student to set up a log form, reflecting the days of the week and the periods per day, with sufficient space to note activities for each time frame. The design should be done by both staff member and student, with the staff member eliciting needs. Sometimes the first design will be poor—that's O.K.!!! The design should be reviewed and modified as needed. Student needs to keep log. The continuity will be supervised by a staff member. The student will need frequent reminders, and sometimes time provided and help with logging information. The log should be kept for a minimum of two weeks.

* * * * *

Discussion

This technique has accompanied dramatic improvements too often and with too large a range of students to be happenstance. It appears to have nothing to do with reading, and was started simply as a technique to show students how much time was spent spacing out or on walkabout. It has become a standard for a wide variety of students for whom focusing is a problem, from the quiet dreamer in the back of the room to the one who always asks for the pass at the most dramatic moment in your lesson. The rewards far outreach the effort entailed.

13. Student with Special Problems

visualizing

Instructional Objective

Student will improve comprehension of independent reading level material by drawing the sequence of events found in the passage.

Process

Student will be presented with a 8 1/2 * 14 paper, divided into nine or twelve sections similar to a cartoon grid. Staff member will select a short, highly visual passage—science is often good for this—for the student to read. The student will draw all of the pieces he can see in sequence. For example, if the passage describes the life cycle of a butterfly, the student would be expected to draw the environment, each stage, the struggle to emerge, the drying of the wings, flight, reproduction and death.

Other Activities

Use the video camera to re-create a story, either with drawing, acting or clay 'Mr. Bill' figures, or, of course, a combination. This is a major project, however, requiring considerable energy and preparation time.

* * * * *

Discussion

The obvious difficulty with this is the adolescent's reluctance to draw. The quickest route to overcome this problem is for the staff member, hopefully one whose drawing is terrible, to model the behavior of the student. The reaction to simple line figures rapidly sketched by the staff member is often 'I can do better.' or at least 'I can do as well.' The often total lack of visual imagination in students is probably due to the immersion in television, which requires no active processing.

Succinct Bibliography for STAR

Educator's Publishing Service
75 Moulton Street
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02238

Primary source for non-reader's group. Has more developmental material on a reduced reading level than any other publisher.

Partial List:

Gillingham and Stillman—Remedial Techniques
Phonetic Letter Cards
Jewel Box
Reading and Reasoning Books 1 and 2
Analogies—Books 1, 2, and 3
Reading from Scratch
Megawords
Explode the Code
Word Elements
How to Spell and many others

Merrill Publishers
1300 Okum Creek Drive
Columbus, Ohio 43216

Only one, but an important one for primer readers.

Merrill Linguistics

Teacher's College Press
1234 Amsterdam Avenue
New York, New York 10027

Again, one reference.

Reading and Thinking—Books 1 and 2 are wonderful for inference—very low reading level, very difficult conceptual level.

Media Materials
2436 Remington Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland

MOST IMPORTANT—It may tempt you to run, screaming, into the night, but for severe dyslexics, this program has meant the difference between literacy and illiteracy.

Ruth Worden Frank—Phonetic Reading Chain

Midwest Publications
Box 448
Pacific Grove, California 93456

Analogies—and any of their other puzzles and brain teasers. Good thinking skills material, sample as much as you can.

Junior Great Books
40 East Huron Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611

Junior Great Books—Books 6, 7, and 8. Take the course if possible.

Curriculum Development Associates
1211 Constitution Avenue, N.W./Suite 414
Washington, D.C. 20036

Reuven Feuerstein—Instrumental Enrichment. Again, take the course. The original mediation thinking skills program, and still the best there is.

Bantam Books
666 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10103

Sally Smith—No Easy Answers. A journey into the mind and heart of the dyslexic child.

Appendix B: High School Redirection Replication Project

Over the past few years, the U.S. Department of Labor has been conducting a demonstration to replicate High School Redirection in seven cities. The Department put out a grant announcement for this demonstration in October of 1987. The competition was open to service delivery areas (SDAs) under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) system, and local school districts had to be listed as co-applicants. The grant announcement required that the following elements of High School Redirection be replicated in the demonstration:

1. *Open Admission.* Any applicant will be accepted, if space permits, regardless of the applicant's past truancy or academic problems.

2. *Enrollment Based on Referral, Not Location.* Youth will be referred from all parts of a school district.

3. *Separate Location from Regular High School.* The schools will not be located within or near a regular high school.

4. *Size of 500 Students.* Schools will aim towards a size at maturity of approximately 500 students—small enough to provide a personal atmosphere, but large enough to be self-supporting with average daily attendance funds.

5. *Location in a Poor Neighborhood.* Schools will be located in a poor neighborhood so as to provide a base of students, and also provide an educational resource for the neighborhood.

6. *STAR Program Component.* Roughly one-third of students in the new school will be enrolled in a STAR Program aimed at individuals in need of intensive reading and writing instruction.

7. *Operation by Board of Education.* Schools started under the grants will be operated by the local Board of Education, staffed by Board of Education supervisors and teachers, and provide for regular high school diplomas.

8. *Independence in Operation.* While the schools will be operated by the Board of Education, they will also have some degree of autonomy in setting their own policies and selecting staff.

9. *On-site Day Care.* By the second year of operation, schools will have a day care center in place under the supervision of a licensed professional.

10. *Limited Extracurricular Activities.* Schools started will not aspire to be comprehensive high schools with numerous sports and extracurricular activities.

Selection of sites was based upon local need, understanding of the project, commitment to continuing the school on a permanent basis, community support, how the school district planned to select a supervisor and teachers, and plans for finding and rehabilitating space for the school. Sites applying also had to agree to participate in an evaluation of the schools using random assignment of applicants during the third and fourth years of operation.

The cities receiving grant awards of $800,000 over a two-year period to start these schools were Cincinnati, Denver, Detroit, Los Angeles, Newark, Stockton, and Wichita. The Academy for Educational Development (AED) was awarded a contract to oversee the implemention of the schools.

Description of Replication Sites

Cincinnati

The Cincinnati school is located in a part of the city populated mainly by Appalachian whites. About 75 percent of the students it serves are black and come from other parts of the city, while the remaining students are whites from the neighborhood that surrounds the school. Forty percent of the students entering the school read at the sixth grade level or below. The school is housed in an old school building that was renovated for the project. The building has a capacity of approximately 250 students. A new location will be found as the school expands beyond that number. The school has developed an interdisciplinary, thematic curriculum which is coordinated by staff in a daily common prep period. The school also has an off-site child care center that is used exclusively for the children of its students.

Denver

The Denver school started out with a ninth grade entering class the first year, and expanded in the second year as these students moved to the tenth grade and a new class of ninth graders entered. The school will similarly expand for the next two years until it reaches a full enrollment at grades nine through twelve. The student body is ethnically diverse: 51 percent Hispanic; 27 percent white; and 17 percent black. It is located in an attractive school building. The Denver school uses experimental approaches to curriculum and instruction, emphasizing affective and experiential learning. It also uses family group classes, called an advisory group, similar to the High School Redirection model. It has a children's center which accommodates 20 children.

Detroit

Detroit was the last of the seven sites to start their school. The school opened in February 1990 with approximately 130 students who were referred by three city high schools. Each of the referring high schools were quite large—between 1,500 and 3,000 students. Students were referred to the new school because of poor or failing grades at the previous school, high truancy, or low reading levels. Many entering students have reading scores below the fourth and fifth grade levels. The school is located in a large building that also houses a middle school, a grade school, and a day care center.

Los Angeles

The Los Angeles school is located in the Watts neighborhood and is adjacent to a large public housing project. It is housed in a building on an elementary school grounds, as well as two bungalows also placed on the school grounds. It is the only one of the seven schools to be operated by an adult education division. It uses contracts negotiated with each student as the basis of its individualized instruction model that allows students to work at their own pace and accumulate credits at an accelerated rate. The school is developing various links with the JTPA system, including work experience positions during the school year. The community in which the school is located has a severe youth gang problem, and this has complicated the development of the school. Youth served by the school typically enter with very low reading levels.

Newark

The Newark school got off to the fastest start of the seven sites. It has a school building to itself, and a full complement of teachers and counselors. Like High School Redirection Brooklyn, the Newark school has family group classes in order to assist students in building bonds among themselves and to the school. The school has a full-time work/study coordinator who places students in jobs and supervises them on a regular basis. It also has links with local institutions including the New Jersey College of Medicine and Dentistry, Kean College, and Essex Community College. The school provides parenting classes for students, and will soon have a day care center.

Stockton

Stockton serves a diverse student population—about 40 percent of students are Hispanic, 30 percent are white, 20 percent are black, and 10 percent Asian American. The school is housed in a set of five bungalows. Due to limited space, half of enrollees attend a morning session, and the other half attend an afternoon session. The school is located on grounds adjacent to a large vocational training center; many students enrolled in the alternative school also take classes at the vocational center. The Stockton school was the first of the replication sites to establish a child care center, which currently accommodates 40 children.

Wichita

The school started in Wichita is one of three alternative schools operated in the city. It is located in a recently renovated school building shared with district administrative offices. Its student population is roughly 55 percent white, 33 percent black, and 12 percent other. The school has developed a work/study component that allows students flexibility in attending classes to fit work hours. It also has an evening session. The school has established close links with JTPA, which funded a summer education and employment program at the school. The school has a child care center that accommodates 40 children.

Potential Role of SDAS and Private Industry Councils

The demonstration sites are only in their second year of operation, and ties between the new schools and SDAs in the various cities are still being developed. However, the Department of Labor hopes that eventually a number of the following links will be developed between SDAs and the new alternative schools:

— *Summer Job Programs.* JTPA funds are available in each SDA for summer job programs to serve economically disadvantaged youth. While not all youth attending the alternative schools will be from economically disadvantaged families, many of them will be. There are a couple of variations on a straightforward summer jobs program. One is to add a remedial education component to it. Another is to design a community service project that students from the alternative school could work on as a group.

— *Work Experience Programs during the School Year.* JTPA funds available to SDAs could also be used to provide work experience during the school year to students who are economically disadvantaged. Again, there are variations that can be added. One is to use work experience slots as an incentive to encourage students to stay in school or to reward them for good attendance. A second is for the school to give academic credit for certain types of work. A third is design work experience placements so as to coincide with careers students are interested in pursuing.

— *Job Placement upon School Completion.* SDAs could help place students into career-track jobs once they have graduated or if they need to leave school to work full time.

— *Referrals of JTPA Applicants to Schools.* SDAs could use the schools as a service provider to which they refer youth with low reading levels.

— *Referrals to Job Corps.* SDAs can assist schools in referring to the Jobs Corps youth who are not doing well in the alternative school or who could benefit from the residential setting provided by the Job Corps.

In addition to these basic JTPA linkages with schools, SDAs could involve their private industry councils (PICs) in assisting the schools in the following ways:

— *Guarantee of Job to Alternative School Graduates.* The PIC could get commitments from several local corporations and then guarantee that any student graduating from the alternative school will receive a career-track job. Further, corporations hiring graduates would commit to providing the necessary supportive services to make sure the youth succeeded in the job.

— *Guarantee of College Admission and Necessary Financial Aid to Alternative School Graduates.* The PIC could work with local colleges in order to guarantee admission and sufficient financial aid to any graduate of the alternative school who wanted to attend college. This would be similar to the "I Have a Dream" commitments that have been made to various groups of students in recent years.

— *Development of Career-track Work Study Slots.* The PIC could work with local businesses and the SDA to set up career-track work experience positions part-time during the school year and during the summer.

— *Design of Community Improvement Projects for Students.* The PIC could help design and fund community service projects for students at the alternative school to work on as a group. For example, students at Bronx Regional High School this past year have been rehabilitating a shelter for the homeless. Many inner-city youth have had few chances to contribute to their communities, or to have the sense of satisfaction from accomplishing something of which they can be proud. Community service projects can provide youth with a feeling of accomplishment, and also teach them to work as a team and to have a sense of community. Such projects could be conducted either during the school year or during the summer.

— *Sponsoring Outward Bound Programs for Youth.* The PIC could develop ties with the Outward Bound program to send either individual students or groups

of students on Outward Bound excursions. Alternatively, the PIC could work with local Sierra Clubs or similar groups to provide groups of students with weekend camping trips. Also, the PIC could raise funds to permit classes from the alternative school to go on weekend retreats.

— *Development of Mentorship Program.* The union and small business representatives on the PIC could develop a mentorship program for the school. Some model programs suggest that persons who are retired or from the youth's own community make particularly good mentors.

— *Finding a Corporation to Adopt the School.* The PIC could help find a local corporation willing to adopt the alternative school. A corporation adopting the school could do any of the activities discussed above, including other projects such as sponsoring a school band or sports team, or giving a staff person release time to assist the principal develop various community linkages for the school.

— *Development of Long-term Commitments to Youth.* The PIC could help identify some local corporations willing to make a long-term commitment to a small number of students from the alternative school. For example, rather than try to involve itself in programs dealing with hundreds of youth, a corporation may be willing to make a commitment to three youth. The corporation would hire these youth at entry-level jobs, and commit itself to working with them even if problems arise, and to help them over the years move into jobs that pay enough to support a family.

— *Fundraising Campaigns if a New Building is Needed.* Many inner-city school districts have a number of unused buildings suitable for alternative schools. However, some districts in areas of growing population have shortages of school buildings and new alternative schools need to be located in bungalows or buildings not constructed for use as schools. In such districts, the PIC could develop fundraising campaigns among corporations for construction of a new building for the alternative school.

Role of SDAS and PICS in Starting New Alternative Schools

High school dropouts and potential dropouts are an important target group for JTPA programs because such youth are particularly at-risk of long-term problems in the labor market. These youth vary in the types of services they need. Some youth are completely alienated from school, and are only interested in job placements or conservation corps or similar work programs. Others are willing to take training in a non-school setting, such as the Job Corps. Others still have some attachment to school, and are willing to give an alternative school a chance. To meet these varying needs of youth, a large urban SDA should have a wide mix of programs available.

There currently is a shortage of alternative schools in large cities relative to the number of students who could benefit from them. SDAs and PICs could play a role in helping school districts establish more such schools. Generally, it takes a new alternative school a few years to become large enough to be self-supporting in terms of average daily attendance (ADA) funds from the State and other funding sources. In New York City, for example, a new alternative school typically requires four years to reach a size of 450 students—a size that enables the school to pay for itself with State ADA funds. SDAs and PICs could help school districts start new alternative schools by providing partial support for the schools until they reach self-sufficiency.

One way to help establish a new alternative school would be for the SDA to treat it as a service provider for the JTPA Title II-A program. For example, High School Redirection in Brooklyn got its start under the old Manpower Development Training Act as a grantee providing remedial education to enrollees in the Neighborhood Youth Corps. Both because of the highly at-risk population they serve and the comprehensive interventions they provide, alternative schools are appropriate service providers for JTPA. New amendments to JTPA being considered by Congress specifically list alternative schools as one of a number of possible Title II-A service strategies. If these amendments pass, linkages between schools and SDAs would be further facilitated as students eligible for free lunch or Chapter One compensatory education programs would be automatically eligible for JTPA

Independent of JTPA funds, a PIC could raise funds from local corporations to help the local school district establish a new alternative school. Necessary start-up funds from outside sources vary depending on other resources available to a local district, but could be about $400,000 a year for two or three years. Support from a PIC could either be temporary until the school becomes self-supporting, or sustained over a number of years to allow the school to provide more comprehensive services than it could otherwise afford.

Contracts for Demonstration Sites

Cincinnati — **Peter H. Clark Academy**

School: Shelly Halmer (513-961-0022)
SDA: Sheila Wilson (513-621-6366)

Denver — **High School Redirection**

School: Pauline McBeth (303-433-8751)
SDA: Betty Sparrow (303-893-3382)

Detroit — **High School Redirection (tentative name)**

School: Mary Caine (313-494-1123)
SDA: Gail Sharma (313-224-1675)

Los Angeles — **Los Angeles Achievement Center**

School: Joe Phillips (213-567-7904)
SDA: Gloria Moore (213-237-1747)
Sylvia Kim (213-485-5025)

Newark — **High School Redirection**

School: Evelyn Lewis (201-733-7067)
SDA: Cynthia Couch (201-733-4821)

Stockton — **Model Alternative School**

School: Fred Miller (209-944-4780)
SDA: Nancy Gutierrez (209-468-3500)

Wichita — **Metro Midtown Alternative School**

School: Jerry Goodmon (316-833-4280)
SDA: Sarah Gilbert (316-268-4691)
Earline Wesley (316-268-4691)

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